United Nations A/54/PV.4

General Assembly
Fifty-fourth Session

Official Records

4th plenary meeting
Monday, 20 September 1999, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 125 *(continued)*

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/54/333/Add.2)

The President: In a letter contained in document A/54/333/Add.2, the Secretary-General informs me that, since the issuance of his communications contained in document A/54/333 and addendum 1, Sierra Leone has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 10

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/54/1)

The President: The General Assembly, in accordance with the decision taken at its 3rd plenary meeting on 17 September 1999, will now take up agenda item 10, entitled "Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization", to hear a presentation by the Secretary-General of his annual report.

I give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: I am deeply honoured to address this last session of the General Assembly of the twentieth century and to present my annual report on the work of the Organization. The text of the report is before the Assembly.

On this occasion, I should like to address the prospects for human security and intervention in the next century. In the light of the dramatic events of the past year, I trust that the Assembly will understand this decision.

As Secretary-General, I have made it my highest duty to restore the United Nations to its rightful role in the pursuit of peace and security, and to bring it closer to the peoples it serves. As we stand at the brink of a new century, this mission continues. But it continues in a world transformed by geopolitical, economic, technological and environmental changes whose lasting significance still eludes us. As we seek new ways to combat the ancient enemies of war and poverty, we will succeed only if we all adapt our Organization to a world with new actors, new responsibilities and new possibilities for peace and progress.

The sovereign state, in its most basic sense, is being redefined by the forces of globalization and international cooperation. The state is now widely understood to be the servant of its people, and not vice versa. At the same time, individual sovereignty — and by this I mean the human rights and fundamental freedoms of each and every individual, as enshrined in our Charter — has been

99-85823 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

enhanced by a renewed consciousness of the right of every individual to control his or her own destiny.

These parallel developments — remarkable and in many ways welcome — do not lend themselves to easy interpretations or simple conclusions. They do, however, demand of us a willingness to think anew about how the United Nations responds to the political, human rights and humanitarian crises affecting so much of the world; about the means employed by the international community in situations of need; and about our willingness to act in some areas of conflict while limiting ourselves to humanitarian palliatives in many other crises whose daily toll of death and suffering ought to shame us into action.

Our reflections on these critical questions derive not only from the events of the past year but from a variety of challenges that confront us today, most urgently in East Timor. From Sierra Leone to the Sudan to Angola to the Balkans and to Cambodia, and then to Afghanistan, there are a great number of peoples who need more than just words of sympathy from the international community. They need a real and sustained commitment to help end their cycles of violence and launch them on a safe passage to prosperity.

While the genocide in Rwanda will define for our generation the consequences of inaction in the face of mass murder, the more recent conflict in Kosovo has prompted important questions about the consequences of action in the absence of complete unity on the part of the international community. It has cast in stark relief the dilemma of what has been called "humanitarian intervention": on one side, the question of the legitimacy of an action taken by a regional organization without a United Nations mandate; on the other, the universally recognized imperative of effectively halting gross and systematic violations of human rights with grave humanitarian consequences.

The inability of the international community in the case of Kosovo to reconcile these two equally compelling interests — universal legitimacy and effectiveness in defence of human rights — can be viewed only as a tragedy. It has revealed the core challenge to the Security Council and to the United Nations as a whole in the next century: to forge unity behind the principle that massive and systematic violations of human rights — wherever they may take place — should not be allowed to stand.

The Kosovo conflict and its outcome have prompted a wide debate of profound importance to the resolution of conflicts, from the Balkans to Central Africa to East Asia. And to each side in this critical debate, difficult questions can be posed.

To those for whom the greatest threat to the future of international order is the use of force in the absence of a Security Council mandate, one might ask, not in the context of Kosovo but in the context of Rwanda, if, in those dark days and hours leading up to the genocide, a coalition of States had been prepared to act in defence of the Tutsi population, but did not receive prompt Council authorization, should such a coalition have stood aside and allowed the horror to unfold?

To those for whom the Kosovo action heralded a new era when States and groups of States can take military action outside the established mechanisms for enforcing international law, one might ask: is there not a danger of such interventions undermining the imperfect, yet resilient, security system created after the Second World War, and of setting dangerous precedents for future interventions without a clear criterion to decide who might invoke these precedents and in what circumstances?

In response to this turbulent era of crises and interventions, there are those who have suggested that the Charter itself — with its roots in the aftermath of global inter-State war — is ill-suited to guide us in a world of ethnic wars and intra-State violence. I believe they are wrong.

The Charter is a living document whose high principles still define the aspirations of peoples everywhere for lives of peace, dignity and development. Nothing in the Charter precludes a recognition that there are rights beyond borders. Indeed, its very letter and spirit are the affirmation of those fundamental human rights. In short, it is not the deficiencies of the Charter which have brought us to this juncture, but our difficulties in applying its principles to a new era — an era when strictly traditional notions of sovereignty can no longer do justice to the aspirations of peoples everywhere to attain their fundamental freedoms.

The sovereign States that drafted the Charter over a half century ago were dedicated to peace, but experienced in war. They knew the terror of conflict, but knew equally that there are times when the use of force may be legitimate in pursuit of peace. That is why the Charter's own words declare that "armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest". But what is the common interest? Who shall define it? Who will defend it — under

whose authority and with what means of intervention? These are the monumental questions facing us as we enter the new century. While I will not propose specific answers or criteria, I shall identify four aspects of intervention which I believe hold important lessons for resolving future conflicts.

First, it is important to define intervention as broadly as possible, to include actions along a wide continuum from the most pacific to the most coercive. A tragic irony of many of the crises that continue to go unnoticed and unchallenged today is that they could be dealt with by far less perilous acts of intervention than the one we witnessed recently in Yugoslavia. Yet the commitment of the international community to peacekeeping, to humanitarian assistance and to rehabilitation and reconstruction varies greatly from region to region and crisis to crisis.

If the new commitment to intervention in the face of extreme suffering is to retain the support of the world's peoples, it must be, and must be seen to be, fairly and consistently applied, irrespective of region or nation. Humanity, after all, is indivisible. It is also necessary to recognize that any armed intervention is itself a result of the failure of prevention. As we consider the future of intervention, we must redouble our efforts to enhance our preventive capabilities, including early warning, preventive diplomacy, preventive deployment and preventive disarmament.

A recent powerful tool of deterrence has been the actions of the Tribunals for Rwanda and for the former Yugoslavia. In their battle against impunity lies a key to deterring crimes against humanity. With these concerns in mind, I have dedicated the introductory essay of my annual report to exploring ways of moving from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention. Even the costliest policy of prevention is far cheaper, in lives and in resources, than the least expensive of armed force.

Secondly, it is clear that sovereignty alone is not the only obstacle to effective action in human rights or humanitarian crises. No less significant are the ways in which the States Members of the United Nations define their national interest in any given crisis. Of course, the traditional pursuit of national interest is a permanent feature of international relations and of the life and work of the Security Council. But I believe that as the world has changed in profound ways since the end of the cold war, our conceptions of national interest have failed to follow suit.

A new, more broadly defined, more widely conceived definition of national interest in the new century would, I am convinced, induce States to find far greater unity in the pursuit of such basic Charter values as democracy, pluralism, human rights and the rule of law. A global era requires global engagement. Indeed, in a growing number of challenges facing humanity, the collective interest is the national interest.

Thirdly, in the event that forceful intervention becomes necessary, we must ensure that the Security Council, the body charged with authorizing force under international law, is able to rise to the challenge. As I said during the Kosovo conflict, the choice must not be between, on the one hand, Council unity and inaction in the face of genocide, as in the case of Rwanda and, on the other, Council division and regional action, as in the case of Kosovo. In both cases, the States Members of the United Nations should have been able to find common ground in upholding the principles of the Charter and in acting in defence of our common humanity.

As important as the Council's enforcement power is its deterrent power. Unless it is able to assert itself collectively when the cause is just and when the means are available, its credibility in the eyes of the world may well suffer. If States bent on criminal behaviour know that frontiers are not the absolute defence and if they know that the Security Council will take action to halt crimes against humanity, they will not embark on such a course of action in expectation of sovereign impunity.

The Charter requires the Council to be the defender of the common interest, and unless it is seen to be so in an era of human rights, interdependence and globalization, there is a danger that others could seek to take its place. Let me say that the Council's prompt and effective action in authorizing a multinational force for East Timor reflects precisely the unity of purpose that I have called for today. Already, however, far too many lives have been lost and far too much destruction has taken place for us to rest on our laurels. The hard work of bringing peace and stability to East Timor still awaits us.

Finally, after the conflict is over, in East Timor as everywhere, it is vitally important that the commitment to peace be as strong as the commitment to war. In this situation, too, consistency is essential. Just as our commitment to humanitarian action must be universal if it is to be legitimate, so our commitment to peace cannot end with the cessation of hostilities. The aftermath of war

requires no less skill, no less sacrifice and no fewer resources in order to forge a lasting peace and avoid a return to violence. The Kosovo Mission and other United Nations missions currently deployed or looming over the horizon present us with just such a challenge.

Unless the United Nations is given the means and the support to succeed, not only the peace, but the war, too, will have been lost. From civil administration and policing to the creation of a civil society capable of sustaining a tolerant, pluralist, prosperous society, the challenges facing our peacekeeping, peacemaking and peace-building missions are immense. But if we are given the means — in Kosovo, in Sierra Leone and in East Timor — we have a real opportunity to break the cycles of violence, once and for all.

We leave a century of unparalleled suffering and violence. Our greatest, most enduring test remains our ability to gain the respect and support of the world's peoples. If the collective conscience of humanity — a conscience which abhors cruelty, renounces injustice and seeks peace for all peoples — cannot find in the United Nations its greatest tribune, there is a grave danger that it will look elsewhere for peace and for justice. If it does not hear in our voices, and see in our actions, reflections of its own aspirations, its needs and its fears, it may soon lose faith in our ability to make a difference.

Just as we have learned that the world cannot stand aside when gross and systematic violations of human rights are taking place, so we have also learned that intervention must be based on legitimate and universal principles if it is to enjoy the sustained support of the world's peoples.

This developing international norm in favour of intervention to protect civilians from wholesale slaughter will no doubt continue to pose profound challenges to the international community. Any such evolution in our understanding of state sovereignty and individual sovereignty will, in some quarters, be met with distrust, scepticism and even hostility. But it is an evolution that we should welcome.

Why? Because, despite its limitations and imperfections, it is testimony to a humanity that cares more, not less, for the suffering in its midst; and a humanity that will do more, and not less, to end it. It is a hopeful sign at the end of the twentieth century.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his presentation.

We have concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 10.

Agenda item 9

General debate

The President: Before giving the floor to the first speaker in the general debate, I should like to remind members of the decision taken by the General Assembly at its 3rd plenary meeting, on 17 September, that congratulations should not be expressed inside the General Assembly Hall after a speech has been delivered.

In this connection, may I remind members of another decision taken by the Assembly at the same meeting: that speakers in the general debate, after delivering their statements, would leave the Assembly Hall through Room GA-200, located behind the podium, before returning to their seats.

I should also like to remind representatives that in accordance with the decision taken by the General Assembly at its 3rd plenary meeting, the list of speakers will be closed on Wednesday, 22 September 1999, at 6 p.m. May I request delegations to be good enough to provide estimated speaking times that are as accurate as possible. This will facilitate the work of the General Assembly.

I should now like to recall for the attention of Members paragraph 21 of the annex to resolution 51/241, whereby the General Assembly indicated a voluntary guideline of up to 20 minutes for each statement in the general debate. Within this given time-frame, I should like to appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at a normal speed so that the interpretation may be provided properly.

The first speaker in the general debate is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Brazil, His Excellency Mr. Luiz Felipe Lampreia. I give him the floor.

Mr. Lampreia (Brazil) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text furnished by the delegation*): Brazil congratulates you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. Your personal record in defence of democracy and human rights, which was forged in the struggle of the people of Namibia for liberty and self-determination, offers an inspiring example for our work.

As a sister nation of Uruguay, we take pride in the work done by your predecessor, my friend, Minister Didier Opertti. I would like to express the appreciation and gratitude of the Brazilian Government for his decisive role in presiding over the fifty-third session.

Secretary-General Kofi Annan is equally deserving of special recognition. In these times of far-reaching and uncharted challenges before the international community, his sense of proportion and the strength of his serene leadership have been valuable aids in the search for realistic and innovative solutions. We appreciate and support his endeavours in the cause of peace, development and justice.

The Brazilian Government warmly greets the admission of Kiribati, Nauru and Tonga, which have just joined the United Nations family.

Year after year, for over half a century, we have gathered here to discuss and debate the issues of our time. Year after year, the representatives of the Member countries of the United Nations have come to this rostrum to set forth their vision of global affairs and to provide analysis and to propose solutions.

As the requirements of our societies become ever greater over time, there grows a sense of an ever-widening gulf between our words and our deeds, a distance that serves only to feed the scepticism of some and the pessimism of others.

Whenever an unfolding crisis and its human tragedy break through international indifference and become newsworthy, it is to the United Nations that the public opinion of our countries looks for meaningful answers.

Unfortunately, however, the international community feels compelled to act in a coordinated fashion, mobilizing the necessary resources and political will, only when long-festering problems threaten to get out of hand, making a satisfactory solution all the more difficult.

The upshot is a sense of frustration and impatience towards the United Nations. This may be because the necessary initiatives are in the end adopted outside the United Nations framework, as was the case in Kosovo. Or it may be because the measures agreed are not up to the concrete needs, as we have seen in East Timor. Or it may even be because the United Nations finds itself once again confronted, as in Angola, with well-known conflicts of catastrophic proportions that the international community has failed to address in a timely manner.

Why is it that certain predicaments generate intense mobilization of ways and means, but not others? Why does human suffering in some parts of the globe fuel greater indignation than when it takes place elsewhere? The plight of Angola and that of East Timor offer two glaring examples of what amounts to a clear pattern of one-sided and unequal attention.

In Angola, UNITA's refusal to abide by the Lusaka Protocol and hardened positions threaten to rekindle in all its intensity the same civil war that over a quarter of a century has caused incalculable suffering to millions in that country, particularly the defenceless and the deprived.

In Angola, which has special bonds with Brazil, the international community is squarely faced — despite the limited international press coverage — with an immense political challenge and a humanitarian disaster of shocking proportions. Urgent and priority action is called for. The Security Council can no longer allow its resolutions to be blatantly ignored, as has been the case.

No less urgent — and in this case the United Nations is now actively engaged — is the task of helping guarantee the right of the East Timorese people to decide their own future as an independent nation, a decision unmistakably voiced in a free ballot. Brazilian society, which shares linguistic, cultural and historic ties with the Timorese, joined in their rejoicing when the vote returned a resounding verdict for independence. There was consternation in Brazil at the violence against our brothers in East Timor and at the loss of innocent lives that followed.

Brazil cannot accept, nor can Brazilian citizens understand, that the self-determination of the Timorese people is not fully assured. We therefore believe that the multinational force authorized by the Security Council — a force in which Brazil was determined to participate from the very outset — will put a stop to the atrocities committed since the popular ballot and will be able to re-establish the necessary conditions for a peaceful transition to independence.

Over the past decade, Latin America, long viewed as a land of backwardness and dictatorships, has fashioned a new international image for itself through the transformations it has undergone. The return to

democracy in our countries has had a decisive role in this, as did our important achievements in fostering respect for human rights — although much remains to be done. The adoption of consistent economic policies, in turn, has made it possible to overcome the endless dilemmas that had ensnared us, and to put an end to the inflationary spiral that had brought so much uncertainty and injustice to our citizens.

Let there be no doubt that the difficulties that we experienced, on and off, throughout 1999 will not cause us to lose faith and relinquish our achievements. For a few days, or maybe weeks, at the beginning of the year, Brazil was dubbed by some "the sick man of Latin America". It was thought that we might slip back into the trap of high inflation, that we would experience deep recession, that we would once again resort to the panacea of stoking short-term growth and return to the old boom-and-bust cycles of the past.

Yet we have arrived at the end of the century with an inflation rate under 8 per cent. We fully expect to embark on a course of sustained annual growth of more than 4 per cent and are set to bring to completion a large-scale modernization programme by means of important reforms in tax, fiscal and social security matters. President Fernando Henrique Cardoso will not flinch in his determination to lay the groundwork for our country to become modern, economically fit and dynamic, as well as socially more just and politically mature.

With the advent of democracy, Brazil and Argentina have developed the solid friendship that binds our peoples, and have over a short space of time built a lasting monument to integration. Our bilateral agreements in the field of nuclear coopération are exemplary and a stabilizing force in the region and worldwide. The Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) — which our two countries joined Paraguay and Uruguay in establishing and with which the democracies of Bolivia and Chile have associated themselves — has fundamentally altered the economic face of the hemisphere and indeed of the world. Our integration process is not directed against anyone, but, on the contrary, seeks to strengthen our historical ties both within and beyond the Americas. Both individually and within the framework of MERCOSUR our countries have become a powerful force in the drive to set the international trade system on a more open, balanced course, one that no longer aids and abets protectionist privileges at the expense, more often than not, of developing countries.

Democracy has made it possible for the countries of Latin America to provide mutual assistance — without undue and unsolicited foreign interference and in a spirit of collaboration — whenever there is a jointly perceived threat to the institutional stability of one of them. Thanks to democracy, the countries of our region have successfully solved disputes that for long disturbed the harmony of the more peaceful and stable of continents. At the end of last year, Ecuador and Peru, with the diplomatic support of Brazil, Argentina, Chile and the United States, signed in Brasilia the agreements that put an end to their long-running boundary dispute. Thus, despite all manner of difficulties, Latin America is transforming itself into a tightly knit entity that is politically, economically and socially integrated.

It is in this spirit of integration, and in the abiding awareness that we belong to one family, that Brazil feels closely attuned to the various efforts at renewal under way in the region. The elections scheduled for next October in Argentina will no doubt confirm the political vitality of this great neighbour of ours and guarantee the necessary economic conditions for stability and reinvigorated growth. These same favourable expectations, we are sure, will be fulfilled at the elections to be held in Chile and in Uruguay this year, and in Mexico next year. Their outcome will most certainly underline the democratic character of Latin America.

The political and economic achievements of Bolivia since the 1980s in overcoming obstacles that 20 years ago seemed insurmountable are a further indication of how much our region has changed for the better. Peru as well has gained international recognition through its resounding successes in reversing the adverse economic trends of past decades and in the war against terrorism and drug trafficking. This capacity to overcome obstacles is equally noticeable in Ecuador, where, with the support of international financial institutions, political forces will — through democratic and constitutional channels — undertake the needed reforms to overcome the present crisis. Paraguay, in turn, successfully dealt with a delicate political crisis at the beginning of this year and is moving steadily along the road of democratic institution-building and economic development. Brazil, as always, will continue to decisively support Paraguay in that endeavour.

Guyana provides a further demonstration, not only of our commitment to upholding and fostering democratic values, but equally of the integrationist spirit that inspires us. It is our hope that Suriname will join in the efforts

and achievements of the region in bringing about these positive changes. The transformations that Venezuela is undergoing have drawn great international attention. This process of change must be respected, for it clearly and legitimately reflects the Venezuelan people's desire for renewal. The expression of this aspiration through institutional channels is the best guarantee that the changes under way will stay on the track of respect for the norms, rights and duties that define democracy.

Brazil is also confident that the Government of President Andrés Pastrana, in Colombia, will persevere in its endeavours to bring peace to this kindred nation. Undue foreign interference would only aggravate an already complex situation, which it is up to the Colombians themselves to overcome.

It is on the success of our neighbours, in which we trust, that hinges the success of the Brazilian people and its Government in solving their own problems and in overcoming their own challenges, which are neither few nor small.

Organized crime and drug trafficking today pose a major challenge to democratic societies. They clearly represent a serious threat to the security of national institutions and to citizens directly, who pay with their own lives the intolerable price for this scourge of our times. The spiralling stockpile of and trade in small arms is closely linked to organized crime and drug trafficking. As its citizens find their lives daily at risk because of contraband firearms, Brazil gives the utmost priority to tackling this question. At the regional level we approved the important Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions. We would like this Assembly to endorse the proposal to hold an international conference on illicit arms trafficking in all its aspects. Similarly, Brazil attaches considerable importance to the work being done on a draft convention against transnational organized crime.

In turn, the continued existence of weapons of mass destruction remains a threat to the security and even the survival of humankind.

All actions contrary to the aims of the non-proliferation regime should be firmly condemned by the international community. At the same time, it behooves the nuclear-armed States, as well as the threshold States, to move towards the complete and irreversible elimination of nuclear armaments. For this reason, Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa and Sweden will once again submit, at this session, a draft resolution on a new agenda for nuclear disarmament. The draft resolution, which seeks to pave the way for a constructive dialogue on this issue, is grounded on a realistic and balanced appraisal of the nature of the nuclear disarmament process.

Our countries' democratic institutions and the international organizations, particularly the United Nations, face fundamental challenges today. Our countries are confronted daily with economic difficulties and acute social grievances, such as poverty and extremes of inequality, which heighten impatience: impatience with economies unable to grow at a rate compatible with faster improvement of the well-being of societies; impatience in the face of vulnerability to crises and to turbulence in international markets; and impatience with political processes that sometimes appear slow to respond to the legitimate and pressing demands of citizens. It is vital, however, that this collective impatience be voiced and guided through democratic channels.

Brazil's commitment to democratic institutions and to the primacy of law also applies to international relations. At the outset of his second term of office, to which he was elected last October by an absolute majority of Brazilian voters, President Fernando Henrique Cardoso made it clear that:

> "The rule of law is the only admissible foundation for the international order. Should unilateralism and the use of force come to be accepted as organizing principles of international relations, in the long term it will be more rational to side with the instruments of power politics rather than to strive for order and to abide by law. If we are to see a truly new world order emerge, one of its cornerstones must be the acceptance that multilateral institutions — not least the Security Council — are the source of legality and legitimacy for those actions that guarantee peace and the peaceful resolution of disputes".

Our societies await, again with increasing impatience, seeing multilateral organizations, and in particular the United Nations, show themselves to be up to the challenge of playing a meaningful — in fact, crucial — role in establishing an international order attuned to the shared aspirations and values of humankind as a whole.

The road ahead calls for renewal and change. If the Governments of the world desire a strong and effective United Nations, they must not only change how they think and act with respect to this Organization, but they must also think and act to bring about change in the Organization. This is what is at stake. This is the challenge before us.

Address by Mr. Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of South Africa.

Mr. Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of South Africa, His Excellency Mr. Thabo Mbeki, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mbeki: On behalf of our Government and in my capacity as Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement, I wish to extend our sincere congratulations to you, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, on your election as President of the General Assembly. I would also like to thank you for the kind remarks you made about my country as you assumed your high position.

We have worked together for many decades. Thanks in good measure to your statespersonship, as neighbours we live together in peace and have joined hands as equals to ensure the all-round fulfilment of both our peoples. These experiences convince us that you will discharge your responsibilities as President of the General Assembly in a manner that will help humanity make our common world a better place for all. We are pleased that you will be working with the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, who has demonstrated unquestionable commitment to the realization of the attainment of the goals of the Organization.

The Charter of this Organization and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provide all of us with the vision towards which we should strive. At the time these documents were adopted, they reflected the international determination to ensure that the catastrophe occasioned by the rise of fascism and Nazism should never recur. We recall them today because we believe that the time has come for determined measures to be taken to ensure that they inform what happens in the common world we all share. The central message they contain is expressed in the words of the preamble to the Declaration:

> "the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom".

We believe that the time has come for all of us to ensure that we work together to reconstruct human society in a manner consistent with this perspective. We further believe that what we have said constitutes a particular and historic challenge to those who occupy positions of political leadership in the modern era, those who, like us, will have the privilege of addressing this General Assembly. Only time will tell whether we have the moral and intellectual courage to rise to this challenge.

But this we feel we can say: that conditions exist in the world today for us successfully to pursue the vision contained in the United Nations documents to which I have referred. What may be in short supply is the courage of the politicians, as opposed to an abundance of good-sounding rhetoric. What are these conditions of which we speak? The cold war has come to an end. There is no sign anywhere of an ideology-driven contest among super-Powers which dictates that each should seek to destroy the other in order to protect itself. It is true that a number of countries still possess weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, which constitute a threat. The only logical way to address this is vigorously to sue for universal disarmament and the destruction of such weapons.

Secondly, I believe it would be correct to say that the overwhelming majority of countries in the world have opted for democratic forms of government. Having learned from their own experiences, the nations have turned their backs on dictatorship. Of course, we cannot say that such dictatorships do not exist or that no attempt will be made in the future to establish them. But we can make bold to say that these exceptions prove the rule, rather than disprove the proposition we are trying to advance.

The combination of these two factors should lead to three conclusions, at least. The first is that there should be no need on the part of any country to seek to establish

spheres of influence as a supposed necessary condition for the advancement of its national interests.

Secondly, the very sustenance of democracy across the globe requires that in every democratic country the ordinary people should feel that they actually do enjoy the right to determine their destiny. In other words, no country should be required to restrict its exercise of this right simply because some other more powerful country dictates that this should be so.

Thirdly, these circumstances create the possibility for a more democratic system of international governance, as would be reflected by a correct restructuring of this very Organization. In any case, the process of globalization necessarily redefines the concept and the practice of national sovereignty. The frontiers of that sovereignty are being pushed back, especially as regards the smaller countries of the world, such as our own. As this happens, inevitably, so does it become necessary that a compensatory movement take place towards the reinforcement of the impact of these countries on the system of global governance through the democratization of the system of international relations.

The developments we have spoken of also suggest that perhaps, and depending on what we all do, humanity has never had as bright a prospect for durable world peace and security as it does today. The mere spread of democracy throughout the world speaks of a greater commitment among the nations to the resolution of national and international conflicts by peaceful means.

I am certain that when President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, the current Chairperson of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), addresses the Assembly, he will report on the important decision recently taken at the Algiers summit of the OAU to exclude from its ranks, with effect from the next summit, all military regimes that may still exist on the African continent. A further decision was taken to assist such countries resolutely to move towards a democratic system of government.

The developments on which we have commented would suggest that the Organization has a responsibility to focus especially on the objective contained in Article I, paragraph 1, of its Charter, which says,

> "to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace ... and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace".

This, we believe, imposes a solemn and supreme responsibility on the United Nations to work for the prevention of conflicts and to endeavour to resolve them so that a durable peace can be established. Sometimes, our response to conflicts has been to wait for them to develop into violence, and even wars, and subsequently to intervene through costly peacekeeping operations. These, at times, serve to freeze those conflicts, perpetuate polarization and make their timely resolution more difficult.

Moreover, the requirement on the United Nations to make such interventions to prevent the outbreak of hostilities imposes an obligation on the United Nations that it should be seen by Governments and peoples as a truly even-handed interlocutor and peacemaker. It can attain this only if it works genuinely to

> "develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples",

as stated in Article I, paragraph 2, of its Charter.

If indeed we are seriously committed to these critical objectives of peace and democracy in the world, then we have no excuse to permit the further postponement of the meaningful restructuring of the United Nations. If we were honest with ourselves, we would admit that what is blocking progress is the desire to accommodate what are perceived as new power relations, to reinstitutionalize relations of inequality within the United Nations in an amended form. This is based on the thesis that the institutionalization of such relations has precedence over the Organization's founding principle of respect for the principle of equal rights among the nations.

In the situation of the cold war and the prevalence of dictatorship in many countries, the politics of power might have been seen as the only path to survival. The management of the world today through the exercise of such power, however modified, will itself subvert the objectives of democracy and peace, spawning pretenders to the throne at global, continental and regional levels.

Simultaneously as the United Nations focuses on the critical question of the prevention of conflict, so must it

attend to such issues as the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, the implementation of the ban on anti-personnel mines, the removal of mines in those countries which face this problem and the control of the proliferation of small arms. Of course, none of these proposals gainsay the need for the United Nations to act with all necessary vigour to help end all existing conflicts of which it is seized, including those in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, Western Sahara, East Timor, Eritrea and Ethiopia, Kosovo and others.

We started off with a quotation from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which speaks of affirming the dignity and worth of the human person, the promotion of social progress and securing a better life for all. We argued that conditions exist for movement towards the realization of the objectives spelt out in the Declaration. It is a matter of common cause among all of us that the levels of poverty, ignorance and disease that continue to afflict billions around the globe constitute a direct denial of the dignity and worth of the human person to which we have committed ourselves. I am certain that we would also agree that the process of globalization has also been accompanied by growing inequality within and among countries. We have also seen how movements of short-term capital have produced disastrous economic consequences in some countries.

As with the challenges of peace and democracy, it is our firm belief that sufficient resources exist within the world economy actually to address the social progress and the better life for all for which the Universal Declaration of Human Rights calls. Further to this, science and technology continue to develop in such a way that it is difficult to believe that, taken together with the large concentrations of capital that characterize the world economy, the means do not exist within human society to make the required impact on poverty, ignorance and disease. Indeed, it can be argued quite rationally that international peace, democracy and prosperity are a necessary condition for the further rapid growth of the world economy, and with it the further expansion of the corporations, both small and big, which require global markets.

Similarly, the revolution in information and communication technology, a critical driver of the process of globalization, both enables and calls for higher levels of education and standards of living among the billions who constitute the human population. However, it is clear that there is no automatic or inherent mechanism within the operation of the markets to enable both capital and technology to make the sort of impact we are talking about on all countries of the globe. When we say this we should not be taken to mean that we are contemptuous of all that has been said about what each country needs to do to create the conditions conducive to investment and technology transfers. Nor should it be taken to mean that we are reopening the debate about the role of markets in the allocation of resources. What we are saying is that the functioning of the markets does not and cannot exclude conscious interventions being made, both to increase economic opportunities and to raise the standards of living and the life possibilities of many in the world denied their human dignity by the scourge of poverty.

In his interesting book *Living on Thin Air*, the British author Charles Leadbeater, writes:

> "The new (knowledge driven) economy needs a mobilizing vision and institutions fashioned to make it real. Bit by bit, our institutions are changing through reform, reorganisation and restructuring — but the process is much too slow, haphazard and piecemeal — it must become more conscious, imaginative and radical."

Once more, the matter turns on the will of the political leaders actually to discover among themselves the moral and intellectual courage to do what is correct and necessary. What is correct and necessary also requires that in this field as well, which affects socio-economic matters, we should review the functioning of all multilateral institutions, including those that belong within the United Nations family. This should be done to ensure that these too reflect the very necessary imperative of the democratization of the international system of governance.

The United Nations documents to which we referred earlier give us a starting point. Accordingly, we believe that there is no need for anyone among us to rediscover a new vision that would inform our actions to build a new world which affirms the dignity and worth of the human person. What is necessary is that we match the beliefs we profess with the necessary action.

We speak of action that will practically address the related issues of peace, democracy and development.

I am certain that such a practical programme of action would meet the aspirations not only of the members of the Organization of African Unity and the Non-Aligned Movement, of which we are a member. It

would also respond to the most deep-seated feelings of the peoples of the developed North, who can have no interest in conflict, oppression and poverty, even if these occur beyond the borders of their own countries.

It also goes without saying that the democratic systems in which we operate would also require that, through committed advocacy, we should secure the support of the electors for what should be a programme of action of the United Nations for the twenty-first century.

The evolution of human society has presented the world leaders who will stand at this rostrum with new possibilities to move our globe a giant step forward towards a new actuality, of which the poor and the powerless dream every day. We will be betraying those millions if we do not act to turn their dream into reality. Let future generations not say that because of the force of inertia we failed to act.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of South Africa for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria.

Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, His Excellency Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Bouteflika (*spoke in Arabic*): So it is Africa, through two of its most devoted and eminent sons, that has the particular honour of leading the United Nations into the new millennium. I refer to you, Mr. President, a worthy freedom fighter for our sister nation, Namibia; I now salute your well-deserved election to the presidency of the General Assembly. I refer also to Mr. Kofi Annan, our Secretary-General, to whom the international community is indebted for the great perseverance and fervour he has shown in his promotion of the purposes and principles of the Charter and in strengthening the role of the United Nations.

I am very moved to address this Assembly, because, by electing me 25 years ago to the presidency at its twenty-ninth session, the General Assembly was even then showing its esteem for and interest in Africa and its consideration for all of those generations of freedom fighters who, like those of my country, have assumed the historic responsibility of making a decisive contribution to the advent of a better world. Twenty-five years have passed during which the inexorable movement towards freedom has followed its course, toppling the last bastions of colonialism and racial segregation, and enshrining the right to sovereign equality of States and the right of peoples to development, self-determination and independence.

At the same time, a new situation has emerged marked by greater interdependence between nations, which, as they have gradually become more and more aware of the unity of their destinies, can no longer afford to live in isolation nor remain indifferent or insensitive when something happens to one of their members.

I have therefore come to speak about this common destiny, on behalf of Africa and Algeria, at a time when our session has chosen the theme of the culture of peace and non-violence. Throughout this century, the world has constantly evolved, created, destroyed, reinvented itself and moved forward. Despite ideological conflicts and economic crises, political tensions and devastating wars, humanity has made its way inexorably towards one and the same history — one and the same destiny.

New challenges are today confronting the international community in a context occasioned by the easing of ideological struggles, the end of the cold war and the creation of a unipolar world, with its inherent paradoxes for development.

One of these challenges is what is today called globalization: a global economy, a global political system, even global values and aspirations — but also, global problems and dangers. In any case, implementation of globalization is encountering a variety of barriers and obstacles. On the economic side, unequal development between nations certainly does not facilitate the establishment of a universally accepted new world order. Worrying gaps are beginning to appear, especially

in Africa: a chronic deterioration in the terms of trade; a crushing weight of debt; fratricidal conflicts; environmental degradation; increasing unemployment; persistent epidemics; falling numbers of children in school; declining official development assistance and meagre direct investment. Furthermore, two thirds of the least developed countries and three quarters of the low-income countries are in Africa. In addition, 50 per cent of the continent's population live in abject poverty.

The thirty-fifth Organization of African Unity (OAU) Summit showed that Africans were ready to face up to this miserable situation by working for peace, stability and cooperation and by entrenching political and economic reform more firmly. But it also revealed how insubstantial North-South cooperation is, showing that it is often limited by policies based on vested interests or selective intervention.

The Summit also pointed out the difficulties inherent in the social, cultural and psychological structure of our countries, with many misunderstandings resulting from the mechanical application of criteria adopted in developed countries not only in the economic but also in the political and cultural areas.

The problems which have still to be solved are therefore numerous, and the international community sees them every day in Africa, Asia, the Balkans and the Middle East. To these problems must be added the global controversy between the champions of an optimistic universality that easily tolerates the advent of and adjustment to a unipolar world, and those who retain a sense of their own identity and consider, rightly, that the interests of mankind lie in constructing a multipolar world.

These problems do not, however, mean that all hopes for harmonious globalization are purely utopian: they merely represent obstacles to an evolution which we know is unavoidable. What would be an illusion, however, would be globalization of the impossible, globalization that ignores the legitimate interests of humankind as a whole, because sooner or later that would be doomed to failure. The globalization of problems is a fact of life; that is why it is imperative for us to find global solutions.

It cannot be overemphasized how discouraging it is to see such a constantly widening gap between rich and poor and between rich countries and Third World countries that are stifled by debt. I certainly do not intend to complain to the Assembly about the many upheavals of a "Third Worldism" whose approach and methods are at least 20 years old and have become obsolete. The world is no longer as it was in the 1970s; it has changed radically. It seems to me, however, that this movement towards pluralism and the market economy should be continued and encouraged, and that it should be accompanied by a movement towards solidarity. In fact, I believe that the logic of power and confrontation that has marked the twentieth century should give way to a logic of solidarity that will make international relations more humane, based on fair exchange and shared prosperity.

The progress of nations would be incomplete if we restricted ourselves to seeking it solely through the market. We must also continue to seek it simply by promoting the most basic human rights. In sharing the idea of human rights, it must be made clear that the definition and observance of human rights must take into account the context of each of our States, with their differing traditions, social structures and priorities. For us, human rights are balanced by the duties of the citizen and governed by inescapable priorities. Apart from the struggle against poverty, disease and illiteracy — ensuring that every human being has the right to a decent and dignified life — is it not true that human rights also mean the protection of society from terrorism, drug traffickers and purveyors of death of every kind? In this respect, there are no discrepancies between our concerns and those of the developed world on the issue of democracy and human rights. Nevertheless, it remains true that these are issues of utmost importance and highest priority.

This is why we believe that the idea of the progress of the human race, and its emergence into the twenty-first century through the adoption of the laws of the free market, freedom of investment and other freedoms, cannot be separated from its progress through development aid and solidarity with Third World countries. In other words, our interest should be focused on the renewal of international action within the United Nations system so as to adapt it to the new world contexts, to help it respond to the legitimate expectations of the great majority of nations and to bring about renewed progress towards peace, stability, equity and shared prosperity.

I come from a continent where people need to have faith in justice, because they believe that the countries which exploited their resources to ensure their own development have a heavy debt to repay. They need to believe that, having given so much to building human civilization in the modern era, they have the right to

demand that their dignity and their humanity should be fully respected. I seek also to remind this Assembly that, by letting poverty proliferate in a world which is becoming increasingly interdependent, the rich countries and the community of nations are paving the way for disruptions in national life and for international relations that will be increasingly susceptible to threats of violence, conflict and discord, which are harmful to democracy and to economic activity.

I also wish to recall that the failure of the Third World, and of Africa in particular, to make itself heard — a failure reflected in the results of the Uruguay Round — does not augur well for solutions to all the problems that I have mentioned. Does our degeneration mean that we are irrevocably doomed to decline, and that the poverty of the majority is irremediably bound to dominate the coming century? I prefer not to believe that that is the case; I prefer to believe rather that recovery is possible so long as concerted and sustained action is taken in parallel with action by the United Nations.

Such action must have two tiers. The first tier lies with the industrialized countries because the solution to the Third World's problems is in their hands, as the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund rightly stated over ten years ago: they have sufficient economic, financial and legislative leverage to initiate reform and to restore an environment conducive to growth for the developing countries.

The second tier lies with the developing countries themselves, which must take on the essential task of becoming self-reliant by organizing their entry into the world economy and by following through with economic and political reforms. Unfortunately, they have no other choice.

It is against this background that Africans met last July in Algiers, where the thirty-fifth Organization of African Unity (OAU) Summit was held. During this meeting, which enjoyed a record number of participants, Africans took stock of their achievements since independence, weighed up current reforms in the light of external forces and internal realities and laid down the foundations of a new approach to and a new vision of the future of the continent. Priority was given to concord and peace in Africa. Africa is determined to speed up the settlement of the conflicts between Eritrea and Ethiopia and in the Great Lakes region, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone. Activities within OAU and the subregional organizations have been intensified towards restoring peace and putting an end to the suffering of the refugees.

Similarly, Africa has unequivocally stated that it supports international legality, democracy and respect for law, and accordingly it has set out the guidelines for the OAU position on the situations in Angola and in Western Sahara. It fully supports the United Nations initiatives there, as it does the OAU good offices in the Comoros, where it hopes that the Comoran people will proceed with democratic elections for their institutions so as to preserve the country's unity and territorial integrity.

A concern for peace and concord also underlies Africa's assessment of the Middle East peace process, which it hopes will come to a comprehensive, fair and lasting solution based on withdrawal by Israel from the territories unjustly occupied by it and on its recognition of the Palestinian people's legitimate and inalienable rights.

OAU is similarly concerned about peace and security in the Gulf, where economic sanctions that are disastrous for the affected populations should be lifted, as should those unjustly imposed against Libya and Sudan even though their Governments have fully cooperated with the relevant investigations.

The human race must enter the new millennium free of the disputes born of the historical vicissitudes of the tormented and tragic century now drawing to its close. In this context, hotbeds of tension and crises must be eliminated. The suffering of peoples who are still unable to exercise their right to self-determination and independence must end. The embargo imposed on the Iraqi people must be resolved in a less harmful way, as our Secretary-General of OAU would say, in keeping with United Nations resolutions. Terrorism, organized crime, drug and arms trafficking — which undermine relations between States and weaken peaceful and fruitful international cooperation — must be a top priority. New, ethical international relations should also be prioritized in order to usher in a new era of peace and common prosperity.

The Algiers Summit, however, did not restrict itself to expressing, clearly, Africa's desire to bring to an end the tragic phase of conflicts which are tearing it apart, and to go along, step by step, with the efforts of the international community to institute a just and long-lasting peace everywhere in the world. The Summit also studied economic and development issues within the framework

of the Abuja Treaty, consolidating macroeconomic reforms through the revival of sustained growth and through regional integration within the framework of African unity, the principle of which has just been enshrined by the Sirte special Summit.

The Sirte Summit reaffirmed OAU solidarity with and support for fraternal Libya concerning the need for a final lifting of the unfair embargo imposed upon it. It decided also to establish new rules and norms to facilitate the development of operational structures and modalities for OAU with a view to achieving effective union between the countries of Africa. Such a union will guarantee Africa's security and strengthen cooperation between its peoples, which will gain Africa the respect and status it deserves in the light of the heavy cost it has paid throughout history in sacrifice, slavery, exploitation and despoliation during the colonial era. Such a union will also promote Africa's material and human potential and all that makes it so different from the rest of the world. In short, the Sirte Summit has reaffirmed in full the right of Africa to be an active part of the globalization process. As a result, justice will be equal for all, and the new concepts introduced by globalization will be immunized against any form of injustice, abuse or exclusion.

The Summit also affirmed the necessity of advancing new reforms in the context of cooperation and partnership between the United Nations and OAU in all fields. Lastly, the Summit proposed a new ethics for international relations, where the requirements of production and competition should obscure neither the higher interest of humanity — whose very existence is under threat from all kinds of environmental degradation and other scourges affecting the natural world, humankind and human values and institutions — nor the rights of nation States to their integrity and sovereignty.

We do not deny the right of northern-hemisphere public opinion to denounce the breaches of human rights where they exist. Nor do we deny that the United Nations has the right and the duty to help suffering humanity. But we remain extremely sensitive to any undermining of our sovereignty not only because sovereignty is our final defence against the rules of an unjust world, but because we have no active part in the decision-making process in the Security Council nor in monitoring the implementation of decisions.

Furthermore, inasmuch as the sovereign state remains beyond dispute a place of social contract and the context within which human rights should be organized — political rights, as well as economic and social ones — the international community should favour stability as well as concord and the culture of democracy for our developing countries. But all this will remain a dream so long as the real issues at stake, those of economic and social development, have not been clearly set out, because, for Africa as for other continents, these issues are the crux of the matter.

The debate on the concept of interference in internal affairs consequently seems far from over, as at least three questions require exact answers: first, where does aid stop and interference begin? Second, where are the lines to be drawn between the humanitarian, the political and the economic? Third, is interference valid only in weak or weakened States or for all States without distinction? In any event, we firmly believe that interference in internal affairs may take place only with the consent of the State in question. We firmly believe that the countries of the South are capable of overcoming their difficulties, so long as solidarity, loyal assistance and the concern of the developed countries and the international community do not fail them.

Algeria has paid a very heavy price for democracy, and like other African countries must shoulder the high social cost of the reforms which it is undertaking. It has embarked upon a vast project of national renewal. It is working hard to ensure civil concord, enhance democracy, establish the rule of law and renew and modernize its judicial system and administration. In short, we are working to create conditions for the best possible use of the country's economic potential and for individual and collective well-being in a society where peace has been restored and where free enterprise, justice and dignity are guaranteed for all.

This is an enormous undertaking, but a necessary one after a decade of ordeals in what was a war in everything but name — a war that was inflicted on us, and which allowed terrorism and extremism to do violence against society, values, dignity and people's consciences. My country is re-emerging, slowly, from these tragic events, which were foreign to Islam. Many things have been said in various forums about this ordeal which engulfed my country — most often, alas, by people who are hostile to or who have only a superficial knowledge of Algerian society and its problems. I will refrain here from condemning anyone's opinions, but I do believe that when a people has been exposed to a tragedy like the one in Algeria, for a whole decade, and has faced up to it with the courage and tenacity which the

Algerian people have shown, then that people should at the least have the right to use its own Republic's institutions to defend itself.

Yes, my country has been wounded — the very flesh of its children has been wounded. Tens of thousands of them are dead — some victims of fanaticism, some victims of others' madness. In general terms, people have been victimized by the general confusion that nearly brought the Republic to its knees, hence Algeria's overwhelming desire to defend its existence.

In this context of passions unleashed, disorder, the instinct for murder, the marginalization of society, devastating nihilism and blood and tears, men, women and children have lived through untold suffering and the country's infrastructure has been flagrantly and blindly destroyed, with extremely negative effects on our economy.

Today the Algerian people are licking their wounds. The main thrust of our national recovery is civil concord; this shows the innate magnanimity of our people and our unshakeable commitment to the lofty values of tolerance which characterize true Islam. Today, the Algerian people are rejecting violence because it is not part of our tradition. They are committed to pivotal human rights, as they were during their struggle for independence and during the building of their country. They proved this in the referendum of 16 September by saying a resounding "yes" to the law on civil concord adopted by the Parliament in July. They proved this also by opening their hearts and extending the hand of generosity to those who had defied society and the laws of the Republic. They are proving it through their reliance on the law, itself increasingly inspired by the lofty ideals of the State of law and which, without being repressive, may not be broken by anyone, including the State. They have proved it because, true to their own selves, they know that peace and solidarity alone are the keys to economic and social progress.

The principles which we are recommending in international relations we are also resolutely endeavouring to implement at home, on a national level. With the restoration of peace, we shall consolidate all freedoms. We will irreversibly establish a culture of democracy and pluralism. We are currently committed to eliminating all bureaucratic obstacles to free economic activity throughout the country, endeavouring in this way to establish the rules of social liberalism and the market economy.

On a regional level, we are pursuing negotiations with the European Union on an association agreement and on the Barcelona process. We shall spare no effort in relaunching the project to construct an Arab Maghreb Union on the basis of renewed inspiration, rational action and realistic aims established in such a way as to ensure a viable, reliable and long-lasting institution. Like other countries, Algeria will pursue its negotiations to become a member of the World Trade Organization. On an African level, it will work unceasingly towards the advancement of the economic integration agreements reached within the framework of the Organization of African Unity; to settle the conflicts that are tearing the continent apart; and to promote long-lasting peace, which is favourable to sustained development.

In short, Algeria believes that in order to contribute in a useful manner to the future of the world, the peaceful settlement of conflicts, international stability, solidarity between nations and equity in international relations, Algeria must adapt to the economic and political realities of this world, modernize, reinforce and liberalize the general framework within which its economy operates, encourage private investment and ensure equal opportunity for all its citizens while ensuring their human development. This comprehensive and coherent action will be taken by my country in order to adapt to the way the world is now, so that it can succeed and so that it can gain its rightful place among the nations of the world, a place we first won thanks to our tradition of support for the ideals of this Organization.

Algeria is slowly but surely beginning to get back on its feet. It has entered a period of convalescence. It has done so thanks to its people's potential, vitality and energy and, thanks also to the solidarity shown by many sister nations and friends throughout the world. From this rostrum let me express the Algerian people's deep gratitude for and recognition of that solidarity.

We are at the end of one century and on the threshold of the next. We are at the end of one millennium and on the threshold of another. I share to some extent the belief that these milestones of our era do have an impact on the life and evolution of the human race.

The twentieth century has had its moments of glory, notably in bringing colonialism to an end, in combating racism and in eliminating apartheid. But it has also had its setbacks and failures, manifested in persistent underdevelopment, in the not always successful struggle

to eliminate poverty and in the never-ending quest for better concord between peoples.

Will we draw enough inspiration from these milestones to turn around mindsets that still rigidly abide by outdated concepts of international life? Will we be able to hold out a fraternal hand to each other so that well-being can be better shared out in the world? Will we be capable of preparing a world for future generations that is better than the one in which we live? We can answer all these questions with a "yes", and it is with these optimistic words of hope that I conclude my statement.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Republic of Algeria, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Sam Nujoma, President of the Republic of Namibia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Namibia.

Mr. Sam Nujoma, President of the Republic of Namibia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Namibia, His Excellency Mr. Sam Nujoma, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Nujoma: Mr. President, the United Nations is no foreign territory to you. For 14 difficult and challenging years, you valiantly waged a diplomatic struggle at the United Nations for the freedom of our people and the independence of our country. Your sterling personal efforts and unflinching commitment could not be better crowned. The people of the Republic of Namibia are very proud to see you preside over the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. On their behalf and indeed on my own, I express our deep gratitude to all United Nations Member States for electing you President at this session.

Mr. President, as you assume this very important office, you follow in the memorable footsteps of Mongi Slim of Tunisia, Alex Quaison-Sackey of Ghana, Angie E. Brooks of Liberia, Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria, Salim Ahmed Salim of Tanzania, Paul J. F. Lusaka of Zambia, Joseph N. Garba of Nigeria and Amara Essy of Côte d'Ivoire. These distinguished sons and daughters of Africa presided over the General Assembly between 1961 and 1994. They did Africa proud and they served the international community well. You should heed the views of all United Nations Member States, large and small, rich and poor. In that way, you will have maintained and advanced even further the integrity and importance of this most representative organ of the United Nations, the General Assembly. I assure you, Mr. President, that you can always count on the loyal and unqualified support of the Namibian delegation.

During your term of office, you will be flanked by another illustrious and committed son of Africa, Mr. Kofi Annan, one who hails from Ghana, a country which lit the torch of Africa's decolonization. To you, Mr. Secretary-General of the United Nations, I express my Government's fullest support. The Government and the people of Namibia particularly commend you for your determined efforts aimed at promoting the peaceful settlement of conflicts and bringing relief to the needy in Africa and elsewhere in the world.

I wish to add my voice to that of the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), my brother and colleague, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria. He placed the demands and expectations of the African people before this body, as well as their resolve to face up to the challenges which confront Africa. Guided by the spirit of the recent OAU summit held in Algiers, President Bouteflika talked about a continent which is confronted by development constraints, but whose people have not lost hope: a people who are industrious, but whose efforts to make Africa achieve its potential are being impeded by social and economic problems. It is some of these challenges that I wish to address.

Today, economic disparity, debt burden, social injustice, unemployment, refugee problems and environmental degradation have become unacceptable hardships in various regions of the world. One may ask whether these burdens of deprivation have become a status quo for the majority of people in the developing countries? Have we concluded that there are not enough resources to educate every woman, man and child in this world and to keep them healthy and productive? Can all the technological achievements that are now at our disposal not be put at the service of all humanity? Words

of reason have been spoken, saying that those who are affluent today owe their tomorrow to those who live in deprivation.

It has been argued that the solution to underdevelopment is globalization and liberalization of the world economy. This forces all of us to be equal, while, in fact, we are not. I believe that for globalization to work it must be transformed from a mere concept into reality. It must be a collective undertaking for the benefit of all. It is only logical and, indeed, morally right that no man, woman or child should go hungry while others are basking in prosperity. Globalization should not amount to protected and selective prosperity. If so, international peace and stability will be jeopardized. As long as over a billion people live in abject poverty, lack access to clean drinking water and do not know how to read and write at all, the benefit of globalization will not be universal. And the reality of inequality of States must be at the centre of any discussions of the world economy. The United Nations can and should help developing countries to maximize the benefits from a globalized economy.

The biggest menace of the twentieth century has been the unacceptably high and ever-increasing poverty that denudes humanity of its dignity. I wish to recall that among the commitments made during the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in 1995, was the commitment to halve poverty levels by 2015. Sub-Saharan Africa requires a growth rate of 7 per cent annually if we are to achieve those levels. The future looks bleak, but the determination is strong to overcome all odds and succeed.

Africa carries 10 per cent of the world's population, but produces only 1 per cent of the world's gross domestic product. Foreign direct investment in sub-Saharan Africa is estimated at a meagre 3 per cent of all total foreign direct investment. With most of the least developed countries being in Africa, this vast, rich but underdeveloped continent continues to challenge our Organization. Poverty and disease have all become much talked about to depict the situation in many parts of Africa. Armed conflicts in various parts of Africa continue to strip our continent of its human and natural resources. This overshadows the overall achievements that Africa continues to make. Africa today is democratizing and undertaking economic reform to maximize social and economic prosperity for its people. And, indeed, some significant economic growth has been recorded in a large number of countries.

However, political and economic reforms in themselves will not deliver sustained economic growth. Increased foreign direct investment is very important to complement these reforms and to sustain the current growth rate. Only then can the lives of the African people improve. Let me emphasize that foreign direct investment should not replace official development aid. In the short term, foreign aid will be a necessary complement to Africa's own efforts for recovery and development of its people.

In 1990 I attended the World Summit for Children, here at the United Nations, as the newly elected President of the Republic of Namibia. I feel proud to say that we were among the first countries in Africa to complete our national programme of action for the implementation of the Summit's outcome. Our Parliament ratified — and, in fact, most of Africa has ratified — the Convention on the Rights of the Child, whose tenth anniversary we are about to commemorate. This embodies the legal standard with which we should comply in ensuring that children reach their fullest potential. Yet, to our dismay, too many children are being denied their childhood.

When a child is subjected to armed conflict, with each and every right being taken away, then that child is placed on an equal footing with adults. And when that course takes effect, then, regrettably, society has stooped to its lowest and the rest of humanity cannot and should not stand idly by. We can and must prevent conflicts from occurring, so as to create an environment in which all children can live, play and grow up under safe conditions. Only through a culture of peace can we combat all forms of child exploitation and, in particular, put an end to the phenomenon of child soldiers.

I would therefore like to stress that if every square metre of land that is inaccessible because of landmines could once again become productive, many children, especially in Africa, would be spared from hunger. And if every child soldier in Africa carrying a gun can be turned into a student, Africa's future will have been secured.

On the eve of the new millennium, we can all look back with pride on the fact that humankind has made major strides towards the betterment of the living conditions of millions across the world. The information superhighway has changed for ever the way we do business. Much of the world is now fully connected through the Internet.

Notwithstanding all this, much of Africa is still struggling to gain meaningful access to knowledge and information. In addition to our efforts to become more "wired", we are now faced with the enormous challenge of ensuring that our countries are all Y2K-compliant before 31 December 1999, in order to avert disaster. Namibia calls on all those countries which have the resources and the necessary know-how to assist developing countries in dealing with this problem. The international community needs to share knowledge because it is mutually beneficial. Developed countries have nothing to lose and everything to gain by sharing information technology with the developing countries.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is eroding the socio-economic and developmental gains that many African countries have made. HIV/AIDS has been rated the number-one killer in many countries, including Namibia. My Government adopted a National Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS for the period 1999-2004. The aim of our national plan is to reduce the incidence of HIV/AIDS significantly by strengthening efforts towards prevention and control. In addition to the existing Southern African Development Community (SADC) regional programmes, we have also undertaken other measures to ensure that there is no discrimination against all those living with HIV/AIDS. The international community should assist the efforts of the African Governments in the implementation of their national programmes to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Next June, we shall convene two special sessions of the General Assembly to review the progress made by Governments in the implementation of the commitments made at the Fourth World Conference on Women and the World Summit for Social Development, respectively. Let us use those opportunities to make equality among people a reality and social integration the norm, so that men and women can live together in equality and as partners.

In recent years, we have witnessed a number of positive developments in the field of disarmament. However, despite these developments, we remain concerned at the lack of tangible movement on the core issue of nuclear disarmament. The central problem is the determination by nuclear-weapon States, despite their obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, to retain nuclear weapons indefinitely. This is being done under the pretext that nuclear weapons are essential for national security. To make such a claim is a clear invitation to other States to acquire nuclear weapons under the same pretext, as by nature every State has its vital national security to protect. In practice, nuclear weapons have also become a means of exerting pressure on and blackmailing other countries. No State or group of States should have a monopoly on nuclear weapons. This is a new type of apartheid, which is unacceptable today.

In this century, international peace and security have been challenged by the barbaric conduct of a few individuals who have offended the very conscience of humankind by committing heinous crimes. Namibia wishes to record its firm stand against all acts, methods and practices of terrorism and reiterates its unequivocal condemnation of such acts. At the Organization of African Unity (OAU) summit in Algiers, the African leaders adopted the OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism. Its elimination therefore requires the close cooperation of all United Nations Member States. However, international cooperation in combating terrorism, and the measures adopted to combat it, must be based on international law, the relevant international Conventions and, above all, conducted in conformity with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The reform of the Security Council constitutes one of the important components in the efforts to strengthen, revitalize and democratize the United Nations. The composition of the Security Council does not reflect the substantial increase in the membership of the United Nations. Furthermore, it does not respect the principles of equitable geographical representation and the sovereign equality of States. In the existing Security Council, particularly in the permanent members' category, developing countries are grossly under-represented. To maintain such a situation is to erode the principle of democracy and fairness. Equally, a selective or partially reformed Council which overlooks the principles of equity and balance is against the spirit of the Charter.

My Government is therefore strongly in favour of the position that we must correct the existing imbalances in the composition of the Security Council. It must become a democratic and truly representative institution, unfettered by the unfair tendencies and practices of the past.

We support the expansion of the Security Council in both categories, permanent and non-permanent. Developing countries must adequately be represented in a reformed and democratized Security Council. Africa deserves at least two permanent seats and additional non-

permanent seats in the expanded Council. Namibia, being a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, supports a reformed Council of no less than 26 members. We do not support those who advocate a lesser number on the ground of effectiveness.

Experience has shown that the ineffectiveness or inaction of the Security Council has been due to the threat of veto by those who possess it, and not to the Council's size. As a matter of policy, Namibia is opposed to the veto, because of its undemocratic nature. It cannot even be overridden by law or by procedures, as is the practice in democratic countries. The exercise of the veto perpetuates differences between members of the Council. In some instances, it has greatly contributed to division and inaction in the Security Council. In other instances, it has even prolonged conflicts and human suffering. If the veto cannot be abolished now, its application should be progressively curtailed until it is removed altogether.

The question of Palestine remains at the core of the problem of the Middle East. Only when the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people are restored can there be lasting peace. We welcome the resumption of the peace negotiations between the Israeli and Palestinian leaders. I reaffirm my Government's unwavering political and diplomatic support for the Palestinian people under the leadership of President Yasser Arafat.

With the end of the cold war nearly 10 years ago, we all expected to share in the peace dividend. In this connection, it is regrettable that Cuba continues to be subjected to a cruel economic, financial and commercial embargo, which must be lifted forthwith. Namibia calls for the end of the embargo so that the people of Cuba can live in peace and prosperity with all their neighbours.

The people of East Timor have long yearned for their right to self-determination, freedom and independence. On 30 August 1999 their dream to determine their own future was overwhelmingly expressed in a referendum. The international community should assist the people of East Timor to complete the process towards statehood, peace, security and development. We welcome the decision of the Government of Indonesia to invite the international community, through the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping force, to East Timor. We call on Indonesia to cooperate fully to ensure the success of that operation.

With regard to Western Sahara, my Government notes the progress made towards the holding of a free and fair referendum. We call on the parties, in particular the Kingdom of Morocco, to cooperate with the United Nations so as to enable the Sahraoui people to exercise their right to self-determination.

Despite the difficulties of the United Nations, my Government regards the Organization and its various agencies as the best possible instruments we have to promote world peace, international trade and increased cooperation. The admission of the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga has further strengthened our Organization. Namibia congratulates them and welcomes them into our fold.

In the current international climate, the United Nations is the only voice which can bring peace to strife-torn areas, bring development to those regions where is it needed most and settle disputes between States. However, to carry out its manifold tasks and duties effectively and efficiently, the United Nations needs money and resources from all Member States, without exception. In short, the United Nations must embody the hopes and aspirations of humankind and still reflect the realities of our times.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Namibia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Sam Nujoma, President of the Republic of Namibia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze, President of Georgia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Georgia.

Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze, President of Georgia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of Georgia, His Excellency Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Shevardnadze (*spoke in Georgian; interpretation provided by the delegation*): I have stood upon this platform on many occasions, and I well remember every speech I have given here since 1985. This is perhaps because, first, I cannot conceive of any loftier rostrum in the world and, secondly, because my

personal political fate has always brought me here at times of great change. My most recent appearance before the General Assembly was in 1992, when I was already Head of State of my country, Georgia. That, too, was a moment filled with drama — one in which a new, independent State was going through a painful birth process.

Today, I am with the Assembly at the end of a stormy century, one which I would call the century of freedom. That is not because freedom has become a universal norm of life — regrettably, that is not yet the case — but, rather, because the concept of freedom has assumed pre-eminence on the scale of political values and also because it was, indeed, in our century that the worst enemies of freedom and democracy were defeated. Perhaps the most unanticipated and important of these events was the demise of the Soviet empire, which brought about the end of the cold war, the bipolar world and the post-war world order.

The collapse of empires follows a more or less similar pattern. Initially, centrifugal forces triumph, but later phantom pains for the lost territories begin to be felt in the metropolis and attempts are made to recentralize the former imperial space.

Yet historical experience demonstrates that designs to restore an empire inevitably remain the unfulfilled dream of imperial reactionaries. History cannot be turned back. However, in the arsenal of today's reactionaries there remains still one chance to partially, if not completely, return to past ways — by maintaining spheres of influence over the territories of the former empire. Here I do not mean spheres of interest, including strategic interests. Harmonizing interests in a civilized way is a normal international practice. The concept of spheres of influence, however, particularly within the context of globalization, represents an anachronism.

But let me return to the demise of the cold war and the bipolar world. As someone who happened to participate in this process, I think an explanation is in order since debate on how and why it all happened continues to this day.

I do not deny that the reasons for the end of the cold war were many and complex. Yet I want to especially stress the role of the new thinking, which was conceived even before perestroika. I am certain that no drawn-out economic hardships, not even any "Star Wars project", would have compelled the socialist camp to democratize within, or to take radical steps in the international arena to overcome the confrontation, if instead of Mikhail Gorbachev and his team, leaders who possessed the old mentality had remained at the helm of the Soviet ship of state.

Since I have mentioned Mikhail Gorbachev, I must send to him, a man who is an outstanding figure of our time, condolences for the death of his spouse, Raisa Gorbachev.

The new thinking of that period contained many elements, but we can generally describe it as a concept designed to make all spheres of political and public life more human.

In international relations, this implied, first and foremost, replacing the class-based ideological approach with ethically motivated decisions, in line with universal values. Only due to this new approach were the countries of the Soviet space and Eastern Europe able to make their democratic choices with relatively little pain. Without the new thinking it would have been difficult to conceive of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan or that truly epochal event, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the subsequent reunification of Germany and the liberation of Eastern Europe.

The old found it difficult to come to terms with the new. The two could not exist harmoniously together. Moreover, not everyone accepted the idea of replacing the class-based approach with the primacy of universal values. I remember that when I first expressed this concept to the Soviet diplomatic corps, it spawned aggressive clashes of opinion and upheaval across the entire Soviet space.

But has not this always been the case? Historically, changes of this scale were always preceded by paradigm shifts in human thinking — that is, new thinking had to occur first. This was the case in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when a new world based on scientific thinking was emerging, and also in the epoch of the Enlightenment, during which the ideas of equality and humanism gave birth to the theory and practice of a democratic state.

In the historical literature and memoirs dedicated to the end of the cold war, one often finds references to winners and losers. It is erroneous to frame this most complex event of global historical significance in such simplistic terms. For example, how can Russia be considered to have been "defeated" when it set forth the example to other peoples by creating its own independent

State? One might ask the same about other States which belonged to the so-called socialist camp and today are independent democracies.

Credit for the victory over the cold war equally belongs to the representatives of the former opposing camps who had in common the new thinking and a commitment to the noble idea of saving mankind from a nuclear nightmare.

If we talk of any loser at all, it was the old, stagnant thinking which was defeated, and a new common sense prevailed. Shifts in thinking should occur at every stage of human development. The end of the cold war is a highly significant intellectual breakthrough of the twentieth century.

The process of renovation of ideas is perennial. Stagnation is tantamount to backward motion. At the threshold of the new millennium, it is necessary that we once again develop a new thinking — new principles in the relationship between States and a new approach to common problems and threats.

Today, nearly a decade after the Iron Curtain was lifted and the cold war came to an end, one often hears scepticism expressed about this great liberal democratic revolution of the twentieth century. "What has changed, after all?" some ask. Indeed, it is high time that we thoroughly assessed what has happened and surveyed the myriad new opportunities that have presented themselves as a result of this tectonic shift, as well as the far-from-simple problems that up until now one would hardly ever think about.

My ancient country, Georgia, is one of those newly independent States which provide a good platform for observing both the virtues and shortcomings of the processes under way in this new, post-bipolar world.

Although the history of Georgian statehood stretches back more than three millennia, the vicissitudes of history caused us to have to begin building our nation State from scratch once again in the last decade of this century. The beginning proved especially difficult. The utter incompetence and inexperience of its first post-communist leadership threw Georgia into conflict and civil war. The result was complete economic collapse and the loss of even those token signs of statehood that we had inherited from the Soviet system. Georgia in fact found itself isolated from the rest of the world. All this was accompanied by an unprecedented criminal rampage the eradication of which took several years.

Georgia began to work its way out of this isolation in the spring of 1992 when it became a member of the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and began to actively forge diplomatic relations with its neighbours and more distant nations. In fact, it was during this difficult period that our country — its people and leadership — made its choice. Georgia would set forth on the way towards building a free and democratic society based on a socially oriented market economy. Despite the serious barriers that continued to emerge along the way, Georgia never once departed from the course it set for itself.

The principles and practice of the construction of our democratic country did not go unnoticed by the international community. Under new conditions, when the bipolar confrontation was no more, international organizations were given the opportunity for their actions to span the entire globe, to help those States in need and to assist in their development. The United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the European Union and particularly the United States, Germany and Holland, as well as others, extended their help to us.

The year 1995 was indeed the turning point in Georgia's new era. With it came the adoption of a new democratic Constitution, as well as the holding of the first parliamentary and presidential elections. In the same year, we achieved financial stability and introduced a new national currency. At the end of that year, for the first time in Georgia's democratic development, growth in gross domestic product was recorded. Very importantly also, law and order prevailed in the country, and the rampage of crime was finally curbed.

It was in the same year, however, 1995, that the first blast thundered. It was a terrorist act targeting Georgia's head of State. This barbaric act signalled to the world that not everyone found Georgia's progress towards democracy to their liking, especially if Georgia were to succeed along the path of her choice.

Recent years have demonstrated that the positive trends in Georgia have become irreversible. From 1996 to 1997, the annual economic growth was around 11 per

cent, the exchange rate was stable and inflation continued to decline.

No less significant was the progress made in building democratic institutions and putting in place and enforcing the legal framework for a civil society. In this respect, it is no exaggeration to say that Georgia has travelled in several short years a distance that often requires decades. I am happy to say that as Georgia continues to improve its democratic institutions and develop its economy we are becoming a partner to others rather than merely a recipient of international aid. This is largely made possible through the new function that my country has been establishing for itself over the past few years.

For many decades the fuel-rich countries of the Caspian region and Central Asia were cut off from the rest of the world by impermeable walls. Now they have begun to seek alternative routes to deliver their wealth to the world market. The south Caucasus, especially Georgia, with its outlets to the Black Sea, has a pivotal location on the route along which cargoes are already being shipped between east and west and between north and south. Since April this year, oil has been flowing westward across the territory of Georgia via the new Baku-Supsa pipeline. In ancient times, Georgia was part of the great Silk Road. This function is reviving along with that vast highway that in ancient times traversed the continents, bridging peoples and promoting the diffusion of cultures and the exchange of ideas. I am referring to the great Eurasian space and relevant transport routes.

International organizations and individual countries have shown great interest in the idea of a rebirth of the great Silk Road. The European Union initiated the TRACECA and INOGATE projects, under which the construction of the transport infrastructure is funded and multiple alternative networks of oil and gas pipelines are being elaborated. The United States Senate recently adopted the Silk Road strategy support bill, introduced by Senator Brownbeck, which envisages providing assistance to the south Caucasus and Central Asian States to strengthen independence and democratic development, as well as to build a transport infrastructure that will include multiple oil and gas pipelines. In addition, the Japanese Government has developed a strategy for the new Silk Road. China and other States are also participating in the realization of this project. The countries of south Caucasus — Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia — signed partnership and cooperation agreements with the European Union that entered into force in June of this year. As for Georgia's progress in building a democratic society based on the rule of law and respect for human rights, its accomplishments have been recognized by the Council of Europe, of which Georgia became a full-fledged member earlier this year.

As I said earlier, the modest successes we have enjoyed on the way towards independent development — that is, our participation in projects of global significance and our aspiration to integrate with international, regional and Euro-Atlantic institutions — have irritated and continue to irritate the reactionary forces that are scattered across the entire territory of the former Soviet Union, where they pose a serious threat to democratic regimes in the new States, including Russia.

The terrorist blast of 1995 was not an isolated incident. It was followed by other provocations and terrorist acts, which included another attempt on the President's life. Will these attempts to force Georgia's deviation from its chosen path continue? We cannot rule this out, since geopolitical shifts of this scale never proceed smoothly. The enemies of our country use the entire arsenal at their disposal, including buying politicians and even votes, in attempting to bring to power a regime that is more to their liking.

In the current conditions of globalization and increased interdependence, no country is immune to the contagion of economic crisis. Last year independent Georgia experienced first hand the repercussions of the negative global economic situation, especially when the financial crisis erupted in neighbouring Russia, which continues to play a major part in Georgia's foreign trade operations. Today we can claim with reasonable confidence that Georgia's young market economy and banking system passed this test worthily, and international organizations and friendly countries made major contributions to our ability to survive.

Unresolved conflicts and our violated territorial integrity remain Georgia's most painful problem — in other words, the very problem which is among the series of new threats that the international community has shown itself unprepared to deal with. As a result of the campaign of genocide and ethnic cleansing conducted by Abkhaz separatists, with external military support, many civilians of Georgian and other ethnic extractions have been killed, and nearly 300,000 people have been displaced. Despite the aid that our Government, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other organizations provide, these innocent victims continue to live in conditions of extreme deprivation. These severely traumatized people, who have

been subjected to inhuman brutalities, demand protection of their most inalienable right: the right to live in their own homes. It is unfortunate that, unlike the confrontation in the Balkans, the Abkhaz conflict has been given no exposure on world television screens, and therefore the international community has little awareness of it. Having seen with my own eyes the brutalities committed there, I have no doubt whatsoever that people infected by the germ of hatred lose their humanity and behave in the same barbaric manner, be it in Kosovo, Rwanda or Abkhazia.

It is difficult to believe what has happened. With the help of foreign regular army units and mercenaries, the Abkhaz, who originally constituted only 17 per cent of the population, expelled the majority just because they were not Abkhaz, but Georgians, Armenians, Jews, Russians, Greeks or other ethnicities. This was accomplished alongside ethnically motivated summary executions and mass killings.

The involvement of international entities — the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Russian Federation and the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General — has so far failed to produce tangible results. In my opinion, one of the reasons for the failure of all attempts to resolve this conflict is that what has really happened in Abkhazia has not yet been objectively assessed at the level of the highest international body — the Security Council, which the Charter mandates to act as the guarantor of security in the world. Is it not all too obvious that it is impossible to fight evil if one does not call it by its proper name — that is, if one does not assign an appropriate legal assessment to what has happened?

The 21 United Nations resolutions on the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia, do not provide such an unequivocal assessment, despite the fact that the final documents of the OSCE's Budapest and Lisbon summits qualify the action of the leaders of the Abkhaz separatists as ethnic cleansing. Indeed, the sole objective of the separatist leadership, encouraged by reactionary external forces, was to change the demography of this autonomous republic. It is hard to imagine that a regime that has in fact attained its goal can be convinced through mere request and persuasion to allow the displaced to return.

I do not want to be misunderstood. We do not thirst for the blood of our Abkhaz brothers, nor do we seek vengeance. No, I am sure that in time Georgians and Abkhaz will dwell together in their historic homeland: Georgia. But in order to speed up the process of the Georgian-Abkhaz reconciliation, the tragedy must be given its fair legal assessment.

It is no surprise that in a century in which the concept of freedom has acquired such scope, human rights command special attention. Before Georgia was accepted into the Council of Europe, rapporteurs scrutinized our human rights profile, examining how free the media were, the conditions of prisoners — including the worst offenders — and many other aspects of human rights. We are grateful to the Council of Europe and other international bodies and non-governmental organizations for their undiminished attention to this critical aspect of life in our country, and for their unbiased assessments and recommendations.

Especially against the backdrop of such keen attention to matters of human rights, I find it hard to understand the indifference of the international community to the fate of the 300,000 people currently displaced from Abkhazia and to the flagrant violation of their basic right to live in their own homes. The matter is not whether or not help is being extended to these people. Of course, they would have been in far more difficult straits had the United Nations and individual countries not provided relief. But in terms of human rights the only response proportionate to their situation would be to assist them in restoring their inalienable rights — that is, allowing them to return to their homes and holding those who have violated their rights responsible, if only by giving an appropriate assessment of the acts of the perpetrators of ethnic cleansing. Unfortunately, little has been done to this end.

Although expressing personal feelings is perhaps not appropriate from this podium, I find it difficult to repress my emotions when talking of completely innocent people expelled from their homes by brutal force fuelled by simple hatred. My heart is heavy. I was involved in the complex processes that brought an end to the Cold War. I believed, as did my co-thinkers, that the future world order, liberated from the confrontations between camps, would not permit injustice; that under the new conditions, the United Nations and the Security Council, at the pinnacle of our world's hierarchy, would be able to prevent individual assaults against civilized norms of existence.

The Assembly can imagine how disillusioned I was when ethnic purging of the Georgian population occurred, and, by the way, remaining unpunished within my own country. I addressed the Security Council twice with a

detailed account and explanation of what happened, but no substantial progress has yet been made, even in the formulation of its resolutions. Having experienced this disappointment, I believe it should have come as no surprise that I firmly supported the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) operation in Kosovo, aimed at putting an end to ethnic cleansing, since I viewed that operation as the long-awaited manifestation of a firm stand against evil. At the same time, however, the action in Kosovo must not be interpreted by anyone as even indirect support of aggressive separatism. By no means. I have always believed that aggressive separatism and attempts to manipulate evolving democratic orders by use of force is one of the worst and most dangerous maladies of modern times.

Since the end of the cold war, during which the threat of nuclear war hung over our heads like the sword of Damocles, while local conflicts, despite their true causes, inevitably acquired an ideological tint, political analysts have made extensive efforts to determine the nature of the virus causing today's aggression and the causes of possible future clashes. The theories are extremely interesting, and the debates as to how well they correspond to reality will doubtless continue for years to come.

On the other hand, from even a brief glance at today's conflicts it is clear that virtually all of them are linked to an erroneous interpretation by ethnic minorities of the principle of self-determination, and to a likewise erroneous understanding by titular nations and their central authorities of minorities' rights with respect to that principle. In other words, either aggressive separatism or no less aggressive violation of the rights of ethnic minorities, and in some cases both, underlie these conflicts.

During such confrontations, a certain segment of the population becomes undesirable to a group of political adventurists. This "foreign body" is then removed through the policy of "ethnic cleansing" and genocide. Today there are hundreds of places in the world where some groups of individuals may come to entertain an ambition towards this manner of self- determination and apply the well tried — and, regrettably, in many cases successful — method, which I would call the method of demographic engineering. It is not difficult to foresee how chaotic our world can become and what torment millions of innocent people will suffer just because they are found to be ethnically inappropriate, so to speak.

Today, when the epoch of colonial empires has been relegated to the past, the issue of the integrity of the State and the self-determination of peoples demands new, clearer formulations to ensure that each side in a potential conflict fully realizes the limits of international legitimacy of its claims. In democratic States, with Governments equally representing the interests of all its citizens, self-determination must be regarded as the right to express oneself in a very broad sense, but only within the boundaries of a State which, on its part, respects these rights. There should be no talk of separation by the use of force and violation of territorial integrity.

Let me also add that the rationale provided by opposing sides to justify forcible redrawing of borders always centres around an alleged necessity to restore historical justice. History, which is hardly an exact science, is interpreted according to the respective interests of the sides involved. I believe that new thinking should have a say with regard to this matter as well. In international relations, perhaps, one must not overemphasize, or, to be more precise, blow out of proportion the role of historical precedence. That was precisely the intent of the Helsinki Accords, regarding norms for the inviolability of existing borders.

At the same time, there is nothing more fundamental to the formation of a national consciousness than the citizens' knowledge of their own history. And this acquires special significance in the present era of vigorous globalization. The efforts of individual peoples, particularly small ones, will not be enough to sustain world diversity.

The contribution of each nation, large or small, to the development of world civilization and culture is unique and special. So is that of my small country. The culture of every nationality is a singular phenomenon. Although the economy, the environment, the elimination of poverty, the management of demographic processes and sustainable development are the main challenges for us all, the time is also ripe to protect and preserve the national cultural heritage, which remains an ever present fountain to enrich and ennoble the human spirit.

The Georgians say "Let us save culture, and culture will save us". Universal homogenization, which endangers the identity of small nations, should be entered in the register of modern threats. I suggest that we develop a collective mechanism for their cultural protection.

Developments in recent years have clearly shown that the existing system of collective responsibility for

global security is still far from perfect. Certainly, since bipolarity has been overcome we have significantly improved the prospects for the successful activities of international organizations, especially the United Nations, whose decisions were often not enforced because of the rivalry between the two ideological blocs. Yet they are not always able to effectively address new perils. Order cannot be ensured unless negative sanctions are applied, and this is exactly what the United Nations is avoiding in every way. Although the United Nations Charter does provide for fairly strong mechanisms for ensuring security, such awesome word combinations as Chapter VII and the Military Staff Committee exist most often merely on paper. Surely the founders of the United Nations deserve praise for their wisdom and vision, but we should not forget that the mechanism they created for our collective responsibility for the world's fate was framed for a different time.

It must be admitted that, despite attempts to establish order in the world, the planet continues to live in a state of anarchy. On the other hand, the need for a tougher and more just order becomes increasingly more obvious. Most of today's threats go way beyond the scope of the competence of the nation-State. They are global in nature. No individual country can cope with them alone. Much as is the case within individual nations, the international community primarily needs the unanimity of its subjects in terms of their commitment to a set of fundamental principles. This seems to be expressed in many charters and conventions. In reality, however, it is not the case. The attitude towards terrorism can be cited as an example. Despite public statements condemning terrorism, it appears that many still allow it as an acceptable means for achieving political and other ends. How else can one explain that terrorists whose identities are known to all are not hiding in the woods, but, rather, are able to find shelter in different States?

Of course, it is true that the world does respond to some extent to threats as they occur. Individual States and alliances of States do make serious efforts to fight global ailments. Sometimes, as has just happened in Kosovo, they undertake such tasks as a coercion to peace. It is my position that no one has a moral right to denounce NATO for that operation, particularly those who, through their inaction, play into the hands of those who disturb the peace.

Yet this is not precisely what one would call a demonstration of collective responsibility. In such a case several democratic and developed — and therefore powerful — States undertake the stewardship of the rest of the world. Of course, we can only thank them for this. But it would be better for all if those who have undertaken responsibility for the fate of the world carried out their mission within the framework of a mechanism established by the international organizations. We have already proposed to expand the membership of the Security Council and address the issue of veto rights in order to adapt it to present-day requirements. In my view, the almost automatic use of the veto is unacceptable. In the bipolar world this practice largely cancelled out the possibility of conducting peace enforcement operations, because in those years any force represented, to some extent, one pole or the other.

With the end of the cold war, the possibility of using collective decisions to bring about peace reappeared. The decision taken against the aggression in Kuwait gave many the hope that from then on the Security Council would be bound by shared principles and that an ethical approach would prevail. There were other encouraging episodes as well. But in the case of Kosovo, a new cold breeze seemed to have begun to blow from the Security Council. Despite its humane motivations, the operation carried out by NATO — like any ethical action today — also contained a pragmatic component. Had NATO not intervened in Kosovo, the influx of refugees would inevitably have upset the fragile balance in that extremely important part of Europe. Perhaps a number of States would have been drawn into the conflict. We might even have witnessed a big Balkan war.

In today's world an ethical approach in international politics is justified from a pragmatic standpoint as well. It is from a position of morality that we should act if we want to do good for mankind. Morality should be the basis of our policy, and it should become the pillar of the new thinking of the twenty-first century.

We are encouraged by the Secretary-General's statement that measures to reform the Security Council will be taking place shortly and that the reform will enable us to act in accordance with the norms of international law when addressing regional conflicts in the future.

Regardless of the serious threats existing today, it would not be an overstatement to say that mankind has never in the course of history had a more singular opportunity to create a just world order and a more harmonious community of nations. True, occasionally confrontational rhetoric can still be heard, but I am

convinced that today's controversies between East and West are ghosts of the past, artificially grafted onto the present. One may argue that this is done mostly to camouflage the acute internal problems of individual States. The generation that ended the cold war, the most dangerous conflict in the history of mankind, without spilling blood, can find a common language between continents, States and individual people and, through civilized dialogue, shorten the route leading to the resolution of global problems today and in the future.

Now that we have overcome the dividing lines of the ideological confrontation, we must learn how to erase other lines that divide the peoples of our world into rich and poor, educated and uneducated. In this process too, a new approach and new thinking are critical. Those who spoke before me have already mentioned that globalization should not mean only access to markets, free trade across borders, free movement of capital and financial interdependence. All this should be paralleled by the globalization of responsibility for the fate of the planet and the realization that today's world is too small to allow for the painless coexistence of affluence and poverty. We must find ways to alleviate the burden of debt on the poorest developing States. Otherwise, the perpetual pressure of a shortage in financial resources will render them unable to emerge from poverty and, certainly, unequipped to build a free society.

Assisting them in building free societies is a pragmatic objective, not merely an ethical cause. In today's interdependent world the poverty of States will produce echoes of terrorism, drugs and crime in others. In order to be secure, the future world must consist of at least moderately well-off, free nations that will pursue transparent and predictable domestic and foreign policies. I recall appeals made by the leaders of many developed States at different international forums, including President Clinton's reassuring remarks at the annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, where he underlined the critical importance of relieving the debt burden on poor nations.

There are also appeals to the effect that we should enter the twenty-first century with developing and economically weak nations freed of the heavy burden of debt. We could, in fact, think of a 10-year programme designed to resolve the problem of debts right at the outset of the twenty-first century. This would be a most fair decision which, at the threshold of a new century and a new millennium, would become a kind of beacon guiding many a nation to a brighter future.

I have said many times that I am generally optimistic about the future of mankind. This optimism is grounded in the belief that we are slowly acquiring experience; we can learn and we can be transformed. The Marshall Plan and post-war Europe, which have vanquished the chimera of antagonisms and showed new ways of integration, are good examples of this.

In 1985, when many from this platform spoke of "star wars" and the end of humanity, I declared that the new thinking offered to the world not "star wars", but a "star peace". I thank God that this declaration did not remain simply a dream, and that mankind is gradually emerging from the nightmare of nuclear war, both on the ground and in the sky. This gives me reason to hope that humankind, equipped with the capacity for constant intellectual renewal, will live its next century with a single mind which will make it an epoch of peace and freedom, justice and universal harmony.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Georgia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze, President of Georgia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Lionel Jospin, Prime Minister of the French Republic

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Prime Minister of the French Republic.

Mr. Lionel Jospin, Prime Minister of the French Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the French Republic, Mr. Lionel Jospin, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Jospin (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like first of all to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. It attests to the esteem in which the international community holds you and your country. I would like to include in this tribute the Secretary-General, who bears the weighty responsibility of

promoting the universality of the Organization and the effectiveness of its action. Lastly, I wish to congratulate the three new Members of the United Nations. The great and fine ideal that the United Nations embodies is very much alive — of this I am firmly convinced.

The United Nations is undertaking a grand civilizing endeavour, a task that is constantly being challenged but ever necessary. To unite peoples to work together for peace and development, to affirm a body of legal rules framing relations among States and to achieve common standards: that is the goal of the United Nations — a civilizing goal.

That goal is achieved first of all through the peaceful settlement of conflicts. The role of the Security Council in this mission is more vital than ever, a pre-eminence it derives from the Charter. France will recall this fundamental rule as often as necessary. To be sure, there have been circumstances when an urgent humanitarian situation dictated we should act immediately, but such an approach must remain an exception. We must take care, as in the case of Kosovo, to reintegrate this action into the context of the Charter. Our fundamental rule is that it is for the Security Council to resolve crisis situations. For that reason, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's new strategic concept recalls that the Washington Treaty recognizes the primary responsibility of the Security Council in the maintenance of peace.

Indeed, the universal nature of the Organization is intangible. The United Nations must strive to respond to crises, wherever they may occur. While we have not hesitated to do precisely that in recent years and on several continents, I would like to express regret at the relative timidity of the Organization where Africa is concerned. The extent of the tragedies on that continent requires us to take more resolute action.

Universality is compatible with complementarity in action. In the interests of efficiency, the United Nations must encourage, in every part of the world, regional arrangements among States capable of handling crises in the first instance. Such is the spirit of Chapter VIII of the Charter. Tasks should be realistically shared between the regional organizations and the Security Council without weakening the latter's authority. For instance, my country has, through the RECAMP programme, along with others, strengthened African peacekeeping capabilities through assistance provided under United Nations auspices in cooperation with the Organization of African Unity.

International security also demands continued disarmament in the context of multilateral and verifiable agreements. This is an ongoing objective for France, which hopes that the work of the Conference on Disarmament will be relaunched in the months prior to the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. France would like to see the prompt entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the start of negotiations on banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear-weapon use, and the conclusion of a verification protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention. We would not support any development that might bring the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty into question and upset strategic balances.

The United Nations mission is not limited to the settlement of conflicts between States. With humankind's growing aspirations for greater freedom and responsibility, this mission extends to the safeguarding of human dignity, within each State and, when necessary — as the Charter allows — against States. State-instigated violence has spawned serious humanitarian crises over the past few years. Civilians have been targeted, whole populations have been forcibly displaced, and refugee camps are not longer secure. This is unacceptable. Consequently, we must uphold the principle of international intervention, under United Nations auspices, to assist the victims.

Every crisis recalls the need for the founding principle of working for peace and for respect for the law and the human person. A case in point is the conflict in Kosovo. Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), which laid down the foundations of the settlement, illustrates these principles and this resolve.

We have set ourselves ambitious objectives: ensuring security for all, organizing reconstruction, ensuring coexistence between communities, transferring authority to local leaders, and promoting democracy and pluralism. The Secretary-General's Special Representative and the KFOR Commander have done remarkable work. Much, however, remains to be done. The atrocities must be stopped, the exodus stemmed and housing built before winter. On the political front, preparations must be made for the future, which will require establishing dialogue between the communities. Elections will, I hope, be held in the year 2000. France has made resolute efforts in this respect, alongside its partners in the European Union, which is providing half the international financing agreed upon by the conference of donors for Kosovo.

In East Timor, another people is asking that its rights be recognized. Overwhelmingly, it chose independence through a referendum. Some have tried to oppose that choice with violence. I therefore welcome the adoption, on 15 September, of Security Council resolution 1264 (1999). It paves the way for the restoration of peace and should enable the democratic process to be successfully concluded. France is participating in the international force established by decision of the Security Council.

Our Organization therefore remains true to the values we celebrated last year, on its fiftieth anniversary. But much effort is still needed for these values to be respected everywhere. To achieve this, it is essential to strengthen international criminal law. France actively supports the work of the international criminal tribunals of The Hague and Arusha. The establishment of the International Criminal Court will be a new and decisive step in the progress of law. France hopes that it will be set up quickly; to that end, it has already amended its own Constitution.

To carry out its mission, the United Nations needs assured means. In order to deal with financial difficulties and prevent these from becoming a pretext for inaction, all Member States must meet their financial obligations vis-à-vis the Organization. France does so completely and unreservedly. A responsible attitude on the part of contributing States would advance the necessary reform of the Organization, including that of its Security Council.

I should like to share with the Assembly my second firm conviction: that the United Nations is admirably suited to meeting the challenges of our new world. Indeed, its mission is strengthened by globalization.

Initially, the idea of organizing relations between States at the world level may have seemed utopian to some. It was merely before its time. Indeed, I consider the United Nations to be modern for the following reasons. Our global and unstable world needs organization and the goal of the United Nations has always been to seek a better organization of the world. The United Nations is in step with a networked world. It is itself a network, a rich and unique panoply of specialized but independent and coordinated agencies. In half a century, the United Nations has made a tool for action which can be adapted to our world. The United Nations has not aged; it has grown with the world. It must allow us to face the new challenges emerging in today's world.

A contradictory state of affairs has replaced the euphoric illusion which followed the end of the confrontation between blocs 10 years ago. Globalization is not monolithic. While it is unifying, it also divides. While it generates remarkable progress, it also leads to unacceptable inequalities. While it opens societies to one another, it carries with it the threat of creating uniformity. While it frees up energy, it also releases negative forces that must be brought under control. The movement of populations and the clash of cultures are therefore accompanied by rising fears as to identity, by religious intolerance and by xenophobia. France, which has a presence on five continents and is itself a land of immigration, has had experience of such confrontations in its history. It knows the risks they entail and the wealth they bring. We will give our full support to the world conference on racism, to be held in 2001. Preventing the emergence of prejudice, which too often has deadly consequences, will prepare the way for peace for future generations.

The fruits of globalization are not shared equally. The opening of economies, the increase in trade and the acceleration of technological progress all fuel growth. But inequalities are growing between countries and within each economy. Nearly one in four human beings lives in great poverty. We cannot leave matters as they stand. The rapid expansion of communications networks does not benefit everyone. Yet the multiplication of sources of information, the increased circulation of ideas and the profusion of new inventions are full of promise. Lower communications costs made possible by the Internet can be an asset for businesses in countries in the South. But inequalities in education hinder access to these technologies. These impressive instruments for furthering knowledge may become formidable factors in inequality. Communication is also a right. It is essential that this right not be threatened by the concentration in just a few hands of sources of information and the means of production and distribution. France will staunchly defend cultural diversity.

Globalization must encourage all of us to take account of the fragility of our world — our Earth and our commonweal. Our environment is not a product, a simple stock of raw materials on which we can draw without giving thought to future generations. True development is sustainable development. Since the Rio Summit in 1992 this realization has been behind the adoption of important commitments with regard to the climate, biodiversity and desertification. The Kyoto Protocol on climate change and the current negotiations on a protocol on biosafety

attest to the importance of the achievements. But the uncertain future of climates and the recurrence of natural catastrophes urge us to make further efforts.

The Earth is fragile, but so, too, is the human species. The spread of new epidemics endangers the health of entire populations. Inequalities in development exacerbate those scourges. Some 40 million people live with the AIDS virus today, the majority of them in developing countries. The spread of the pandemic in Africa is a matter of major concern for us. I shall come back to that issue.

Globalization is changing the nature of organized crime, an area in which there has been a real explosion. The much greater fluidity in movement allows criminal networks to exploit the inconsistencies between one national law and another and the weaknesses of some of them so as to hide from justice. My country is ready to make every effort to combat this scourge. The President of the French Republic made that clear last year at the special session of the General Assembly devoted to that issue. The United Nations has long been engaged in the fight against international drug-trafficking, building up expertise, establishing specialized services and drafting a body of doctrine and a legal framework. These must be strengthened. But, above all, States must be more committed to action. In January negotiations began in Vienna on a convention against transnational organized crime. We must bring this to a satisfactory conclusion in the year 2000.

Faced with globalization, we have a choice to make. We can either go along with the supposedly universal economic laws, and in so doing abdicate our political responsibilities, or we can seek to impose order on globalization and thereby achieve control of our collective future. For my part, I believe that global problems call for global responses and that an unstable world needs to be regulated, requiring what our Anglo-Saxon friends might call "rules and regulations". This world needs rules. It needs the United Nations.

This choice is also a matter of sovereignty. As the Secretary-General pointed out on 8 December last year in Paris, the first words of our Charter, "We the Peoples of the United Nations", make it an expression of popular sovereignty. But in order for the sovereignty of peoples to be affirmed they must find the means to acquire the mechanisms, the means of control and the benefits of globalization. That is my third conviction. The more the world becomes globalized, the more it needs rules. Faced with the temptation of unilateralism, it is more necessary than ever to base our action on multilateral rules respected by all. First of all, these concern the economy. We must define the rules of the game so that everyone can benefit from globalization. We must define the rules of the game between the industrial and developing countries and between the major economic actors, small and medium-sized business and the citizens of our countries who work and produce.

In the financial sphere, we have to strengthen the stability of the monetary and financial system by ensuring the political legitimacy of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), involving the developing countries more closely in the adoption of common rules and making private financial operators liable for the consequences of their decisions for countries in crisis. Real progress has been made since the crises of 1997 and 1998. France contributed to this by its proposals, especially in regard to hedge funds and fiscal havens. It will continue to work to this end, as much remains to be done.

These rules of the game have to be based on better coordination among international institutions. Since 1945, international cooperation has respected the principle of specialization of institutions. In the future, the task is to make them more complementary. Economic and trade rules cannot disregard the most elementary social and environmental norms. Accordingly, France supported the adoption by the International Labour Conference a year ago of a declaration on the fundamental principles and rights involved in labour. The International Labour Organization (ILO) is an irreplaceable forum for dialogue between government and social partners and for the formulation of minimal standards. It is desirable that it establish close relations with other organizations, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Bank.

For these rules of the game to be better respected, appropriate cooperation has to be established with the poorest countries. Their debt burden continues to be the primary obstacle to development. At their meeting in Cologne, the G-7 countries pledged to grant further debt relief. France contributed to this. Three principles will be applied: solidarity, which calls for us to grant the poorest countries the most favourable debt treatment; fairness, which requires the rich countries to share the financial effort in a balanced way; and responsibility, whereby the countries benefiting from this aid undertake policies directed towards sustainable development and the fight against poverty. For these countries, official development

assistance remains indispensable. France will continue to advocate greater effort on the part of the richest countries.

Our action should be increasingly inspired by the affirmation of common values and rules. Human rights are central to this approach. I am referring in particular to the weakest children. The ILO Convention which outlaws the worst forms of child labour is a new case in point. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child must be supplemented as soon as possible by the two protocols now being negotiated, one against the recruitment of children in armed conflicts, the other against the sale of children and child prostitution and pornography.

To affirm the rights of women is to recognize their decisive role in education, in the production of wealth and in development. But it is also to combat the discrimination and violence which they suffer. France has made equality between women and men one of the cornerstones in the renewal of its public life. The additional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms Discrimination against Women, submitted to the General Assembly for approval, offers women the possibility to assert their rights in an individual capacity. That is a major step forward. The special session of the General Assembly in June 2000 will highlight the progress that has been achieved since the 1995 Conference in Beijing.

Reaffirming the right of all human beings to health means combating pandemics everywhere. In December 1997, in Abidjan, France proposed the establishment of a "therapeutic solidarity fund" to mobilize the international community to care for and treat AIDS sufferers. The countries of the South and associations involved in combating the disease welcomed the proposal warmly. But the impact of AIDS on development remains dramatic. We must intensify our efforts to reduce this plague. Only the United Nations can give these efforts the necessary breadth.

The principle of precaution has to be the basis for our action regarding the environment and health safety. The Montreal Protocol for the protection of the ozone layer, based on the principle of differentiated commitments between the North and South, is an example of well-conceived international action. These efforts must be continued. We will do so by advocating, with our European Union partners, a world convention on forests and by redoubling efforts to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in the atmosphere. Precaution must also be the guiding principle in monitoring food safety. The combination of concern for sustainable agriculture, the quality of products and the preservation of food traditions in each country explain the intensity of recent reactions. France therefore intends to see these demands taken into account at the forthcoming WTO negotiations.

In order to address and overcome the world's problems, to derive the best from globalization, we need nations to be aware of their responsibilities, and we need also to have "more" of the United Nations. Through an Organization strengthened by a renewed sense of mission, supported by sovereign States and regional organizations, we will be able to further respect for human rights, promote democracy, work for sustainable development and help all to achieve their potential.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of France for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Lionel Jospin, Prime Minister of France, was escorted from the rostrum.

Mr. El-Khatib (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Permit me first to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the office of President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. I am fully confident that your experience and skills will bring the work of this session to a successful conclusion. Please permit me also to express my deep appreciation and gratitude to your predecessor, Mr. Didier Opertti, for his magnificent and distinguished stewardship, which made a success of the last session.

I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his wise leadership and outstanding work towards realizing and emphasizing the goals and principles of the United Nations and his tireless efforts to achieve peace, security and stability in the world.

In the last few months of the second millennium, and as we bid farewell to it and await the dawning of the third millennium, this session of the General Assembly takes place at an important historic and symbolic moment, a moment of mixed emotions. We look back and see that mankind has achieved great things despite the serious suffering and pain that have marked the twentieth century. We look forward with great hope to entering a new era in which we shall build a more humanitarian world, in which nations will be able to live in true partnership, with a sense of belonging to this planet, in a more just and harmonious way. We shall have an enhanced ability to cope collectively with the

major challenges that confront us and to respond to changes that require a long-range global vision. This will increase our ability to provide answers and solutions to the difficult questions and issues that face us.

This historic moment is of particular importance in the life of Jordan, which was engulfed by grief a few months ago, when it was deprived of its great leader, the late King Hussein Ibn Talal — may God bless his soul. He had succeeded in turning Jordan from a small country with limited resources into an oasis of peace and stability in a region beset by disturbances and wars. This country has just begun a new era under the leadership of King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein. His Majesty has assumed the responsibility for continuing, with renewed vigour, to lead Jordan to progress and prosperity, as we look forward to ushering in the new century. He is committed also to Jordan's continuing to make its important and essential contribution to the building of peace in the Middle East and to continuing to contribute generously at the international level. He strongly believes, as Jordan's leaders have always believed, that our country belongs to this international family. Jordan is committed to the Charter of the United Nations and to the principles of international law.

Our late leader was a unique international leader, with an unflinching belief in the role of the United Nations and in the peaceful settlement of disputes. He expressed his belief in these principles by working all his life to bring about a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East based on international legitimacy. He did this out of his strong belief in human dignity, in people's right to live free from all forms of injustice and despotism, and out of an awareness that human life is too precious to be wasted in confrontations and wars. Human beings have the right to lead free and dignified lives, channelling all their resources and energies towards achieving economic and social development and participating in building a prosperous and secure future for the generations to come.

The life of our great leader who is, alas, no more, is the story of the building of modern Jordan. His exceptional contributions in the international arena were also a rare example of what can be achieved by a historic leader who believes in high moral principles and supreme virtues. Jordanians felt a deep sense of pride and appreciation when they saw the whole world — leaders and common people alike — standing side by side with them, sharing their grief at the loss of the creator of their renaissance and their modern State. They also felt a deep sense of trust and confidence in the strength and durability of their constitutional and institutional structures, which were built by the late leader of their country and have ensured a stable and successful beginning to the era of King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein, in a way that has won the appreciation and respect of the world.

Jordanians are rallying today behind their King and marching behind him on the road to realizing their hopes and aspirations. Jordan is beginning, under the leadership of King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein, a new era with a firm commitment to following the same course that has distinguished and will continue to distinguish Jordanian policy at both the domestic and international levels.

Over the past few months, Jordan has continued its efforts to advance the peace process in the Middle East. This process had suffered over the past three years from foot-dragging leading to effective deadlock, all of which severely tested the confidence of the peoples of the region in the peace process as a whole. The result of last May's parliamentary elections in Israel gave rise to new hopes of reviving this process and putting it back on track. The positive developments of the past few weeks show that the region stands now before a second historic opportunity to achieve peace on all tracks. We sincerely hope that the leaders of the region will seize this opportunity, live up to the expectations and aspirations of their peoples and not hesitate to take the bold decisions needed to bring the negotiations to fruition.

The question of Palestine has been and will continue to be at the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Middle East crisis. The establishment of peace in the region therefore requires, first and foremost, that a just solution should be reached to this question — a solution with which the peoples of the region will be satisfied and which they will if need be defend. Jordan has been calling throughout the past year for the Wye River Memorandum, which was arrived at with the unprecedented involvement and assistance of the late King Hussein, to be implemented. We have been consistently aware of the impact that implementation of the Memorandum would have on reactivating the peace process on all tracks, on establishing confidence and a spirit of partnership between the Palestinian and Israeli leaderships, and on re-establishing confidence in the peace process amongst the peoples of the region. The signing of the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum has enhanced the prospects for implementing the Wye River Memorandum in a way that we hope will advance the final status negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis so that a settlement may be reached that would

ensure that the Palestinian people realize their right to self-determination, including their right to establish an independent State on their national territory, with Al-Quds al-Sharif — Holy Jerusalem — as its capital.

As King Abdullah II has emphasized, Jordan will continue to provide support for a successful conclusion of the negotiations. We are directly interested in their success because the issues on the agenda relate to our national interest, particularly the issues of the refugees, the borders and Jerusalem. Over the past 50 years, Jordan, more than any other party, has shouldered the burden of the refugee problem. This has put immense pressures on Jordan's resources and economy, particularly given that every reduction in the services provided by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has placed additional burdens on Jordan. Direct expenditures by the Government of Jordan on services provided to the refugees in 1998 reached 4.75 times the amount spent by UNRWA on such services. Total expenditures incurred by the Government of Jordan equal the entire budget that UNRWA spends on refugees in all its areas of operations throughout the Middle East. Jordan calls on the international community not to allow any reductions in the role of UNRWA or in its programmes until the refugee question has been resolved in accordance with international legitimacy — which would lead to the closing of this file in its entirety once and for all. Jordan also calls on the donor countries to continue their support for UNRWA to enable it to continue to discharge its responsibilities.

With regard to the peace process on other tracks, Jordan believes that a comprehensive solution is a prerequisite for the establishment of peace in the region. Without such a solution, no settlement can be assured of durability. Jordan therefore strongly supports the efforts to reactivate negotiations on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks. It supports the demand by Syria and Lebanon that negotiations should be resumed from the point at which they stopped. The Jordanian leadership will spare no effort to help bring about a breakthrough in negotiations on both tracks.

Hopes have been rising over the past few weeks that this can be achieved, particularly in view of Syria's reaffirmation of its full commitment to work for the establishment of peace and of its concern for reviving the peace process and bringing it to its desired goal: the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement. There have also been a number of positive indicators from the Syrian Government and the Israeli Government has said that it is convinced of the crucial importance of reaching a peace agreement with Syria. While looking forward to these positive developments with great hopes, the peoples of the region earnestly desire that this historic opportunity should not be missed and that the efforts made will succeed in reaching a settlement whereby Syria and Lebanon will have their legitimate rights restored through Israel's withdrawal from the Syrian Arab Golan Heights and from southern Lebanon in implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

The peoples of the Middle East region have suffered unprecedented hardships because of the failure to reach a comprehensive, just and lasting peaceful settlement. Vast resources have been squandered on a useless arms race that failed to provide security for any of the parties. Today the peoples of the region look forward to real progress in the peace process — progress that will help create a climate conducive to an end to the arms race and to convincing the various parties that peace is the only option capable of providing security for all. It will also convince them to make the Middle East a zone free from weapons of mass destruction. This requires a commitment from all parties to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

The issues of refugees, economic disparities and water, as well as the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, require effective regional cooperation and concrete international support. Without resolving the fundamental political aspects of the conflict, the region will continue to suffer from the consequences of non-cooperation in resolving these issues. Unless they are resolved, they themselves will escalate and create new hotbeds of conflict in the region.

On the eastern flank of our region, the Iraqi people continue to suffer unprecedented hardships as a result of the continued economic sanctions. The price of these sanctions is paid by the Iraqi people in terms of their health, nutrition, education and prospects for progress. This poses serious future dangers for the region as a whole.

Jordan therefore calls for ending this suffering by lifting the sanctions. It also calls for the implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, including those concerning the Kuwaiti prisoners of war and missing persons. It further calls upon the Security Council to conduct a comprehensive review that would

lead to extricating Iraq from this situation and to affirm its position of upholding the territorial integrity of Iraq as one of the main pillars of regional security.

Jordan's geographical location between two extremely complex situations resulting from the consequences of the Middle East crisis in general and the lack of progress in the peace process during the past three years in particular, as well as the continued economic sanctions against Iraq for nine years, has subjected the Jordanian economy to tremendous pressures. Countries with capabilities and resources much greater than Jordan's would have difficulty coping with them. Although Jordan is committed to implementing an integrated programme of reform and restructuring of its economy and to taking difficult and painful economic measures, the impact of these two situations makes it virtually impossible for Jordan to achieve acceptable levels of economic growth, and it continues to suffer a huge external debt.

Viewing the real economic situation of Jordan and the challenges facing it without linking it to the regional environment that affects it does not give a true picture of this situation. While Jordan is grateful for and appreciative of the international community's support for Jordan's efforts to cope with its enormous economic challenges, and its assistance to Jordan in playing its central role in maintaining stability in the region, Jordan would like the international community to have a better understanding of its economic problems. From this perspective, we view with special appreciation the final communiqué issued at the Summit meeting of the leaders of the industrialized nations in Cologne last June, which reflected political will to help Jordan and called for the consideration of reducing Jordan's foreign debt-burden. We hope that the friendly creditor countries will take all possible measures to translate that political will into action, enabling Jordan to reduce its debt burden to a point that allows its economy to be revitalized and to achieve higher growth rates.

The tragic situation the people of Kosovo were made to experience severely tested the ability of the international community, at the close of this century, to prevent the crimes of ethnic cleansing and the violation of basic human rights from being committed in a most despicable, racist manner. This matter raises extremely serious and complex questions about the role of the United Nations and the limits that separate the right of States to assert their sovereignty without committing mass crimes against helpless unarmed civilians.

There are lessons to be drawn from this bitter human experience. On the one hand, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's ability to put an end to the criminal acts has given clear evidence to all those who harbour thoughts of rebelling against international law and of committing similar acts that they should not presume that their domestic military strength ensures absolute dominance, including violation of human rights. Upholding the principle of sovereignty should not overturn the obligation to observe human rights and international humanitarian law.

On the other hand, as Members of this international Organization, we must look into finding mechanisms that ensure the enhancement of the United Nations and its ability to be the framework that expresses the determination of the international community to prevent such crimes, and to be the umbrella for the coordination and organization of collective international action to achieve that goal.

That situation has demonstrated the need for formulating a new international order for the twenty-first century, in which all peoples can enjoy respect for their diversity and can participate in the formation of a world conscience that ensures their coexistence. Continued progress by peoples in adopting democracy as a way of life makes it urgent to strengthen democracy within the international system. Since the United Nations is the backbone of the world system, it must evolve in such a way that reflects the new realities in the international arena.

Our international community has an urgent need to pause for a real review of the international situation in all its dimensions: political, security, economic, environmental and human rights. We hope that the world summit to be held next year will provide an opportunity for such a review.

While we see that many issues and crises considered by the United Nations remain to be resolved, this does not necessarily mean failure on the part of the United Nations as much as it demonstrates the importance of an existing political will to resolve them.

Furthermore, the challenges of globalization pose new kinds of global problems, which require harmonious global solutions to the challenges facing developed societies, such as terrorism, drug-trafficking and pollution of the environment, and to the challenges that threaten the developing countries, such as debt, unemployment

and economic recession. Such solutions must also strengthen the ability of the developing countries to benefit from the opportunities provided by globalization and to avoid its negative effects by preventing a broadening of the inequalities that lie between them and the developed countries. The persistence of these inequalities will cause the developing countries to remain on the periphery of globalization.

Despite the magnitude of the challenges that continue to confront us as we begin the proceedings of this last session of the General Assembly in this century, we should not overlook the many positive steps that have been made recently. The adoption of the Statute of the International Criminal Court was a particularly important measure taken towards confronting and preventing the perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity from escaping punishment. I must also mention the successful conclusion of the first Conference of States Parties on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and On Their Destruction.

Such accomplishments contribute to strengthening human security and consolidating the commitment to human rights. They also provide examples of the potential for activating international cooperation in many areas, including the promotion of international commitment to condemning and prohibiting terrorism.

In a different context, Jordan welcomes the agreement reached by Libya and the United Nations on the Lockerbie issue. It also commends the strenuous efforts made by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, which contributed to the reaching of an agreement. It calls for the complete lifting of sanctions against Libya, after the removal of the reasons for such sanctions and following the extradition of the two suspects for trial.

On the matter of regional crises, we appeal to our friends in Pakistan and India to resort to peaceful means to resolve their conflict and to refrain from any escalation that would seriously endanger the peace of the Indian subcontinent and the whole world.

As for the dispute between the United Arab Emirates and the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan calls for, as it always has, the resolution of this dispute through dialogue based upon mutual respect. It also hopes that Iran will heed the United Arab Emirates' request to enter into dialogue with a specific timetable and agenda, in order to reach a solution that conforms to international legitimacy, which denies the admissibility of occupation of territory by force.

Jordan attaches special importance to maintaining a dialogue between religions and civilizations, in order to bring closer together the views of the various beliefs, religions and civilizations. This will also create a common base for developing humanitarian thought, which calls for peace and cooperation rather than confrontation. These efforts have resulted in creating a greater awareness at the domestic and international levels of the goals of this dialogue. We hope that the United Nations will promote, through its specialized agencies, programmes of dialogue in the various fields of human activity and at all national, regional and international levels.

The international community is called upon to use dialogue to combat dangerous discriminatory practices, which we see today, such as Islamophobia. Islam is being subjected to a severe and unjustified attack, which attempts, intentionally or unintentionally, to establish a linkage between Islam and those extremist and terrorist movements that hurt Islam and Muslims by using religion as a tool. Discrimination and arbitrary practices against Muslim populations in various countries are only a result of extremist thinking, far removed from the principles of civilized behaviour and humanity. The international community must consider how to confront this phenomenon of Islamophobia in order to prevent its proliferation.

Natural disasters, which have afflicted many countries recently, remind us of a basic fact, which is that we all face phenomena and challenges that do not discriminate between us on the basis of race, religion, wealth or geographical location. While expressing sympathy to our friends in Turkey and Greece, which have been hit by earthquakes recently, and our admiration for the positive sentiments they have expressed to each other in their suffering, we realize that confronting natural dangers and disasters, like confronting other challenges, requires a sincere political will to take collective action in order to preserve the planet, to which we all belong equally.

Agenda item 8

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

Letters from the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences (A/54/313/Add.1 and 2)

The President: I should like to draw attention to the two letters dated 15 September 1999 from the Chairman

of the Committee on Conferences addressed to the President of the General Assembly, contained in document A/54/313/Add.1 and 2. As members are aware, the Assembly, in paragraph 7 of resolution 40/243, decided that no subsidiary organ of the General Assembly should be permitted to meet at United Nations Headquarters during a regular session of the General Assembly unless explicitly authorized by the Assembly.

As indicated in document A/54/313/Add.1, the Committee on Conferences has recommended that the General Assembly authorize the Preparatory Committee for the special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and further initiatives to meet in New York during the main part of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

May I take it that the General Assembly adopts this recommendation of the Committee on Conferences?

It was so decided.

The President: As indicated in document A/54/313/Add.2, the Committee on Conferences has recommended that the General Assembly authorize the Committee on Information to meet in New York during the main part of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

May I take it that the General Assembly adopts this recommendation of the Committee on Conferences?

It was so decided.

Announcement

The President: As members can see, this meeting has gone quite a bit past 1 p.m. in order to accommodate all the speakers on the list for this meeting. In this connection, I should like to again remind members that the General Assembly, in paragraph 21 of the annex to resolution 51/241, indicated a voluntary guideline of up to 20 minutes for each statement in the general debate.

I would appeal to speakers in future meetings to make an effort to observe this voluntary 20-minute guideline for the general debate.

The meeting rose at 2.05 p.m.